



THE UNPUBLISHED CORRESPONDENCE OF  
HONORÉ DE BALZAC  
AND  
MADAME ZULMA CARRAUD  
1829 - 1850



HONORÉ DE BALZAC  
*from the portrait by Louis Boulanger*

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TRANSLATED  
INTO ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST TIME  
BY J. LEWIS MAY ✓

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## Translator's Introduction

THE BOOKS concerning Balzac, and their number is formidable, make scanty reference to Madame Carraud Madame de Berny, the Marquise de Castries, the Contessa Guidoboni-Visconti, the famous Madame Hanska (*l'Étrangère*)—these, and other more fleeting affairs, have afforded, and will doubtless continue to afford, abundant material for those purveyors of polite improprieties, who are never found wanting in any generation, ‘politic worms’ that prey upon the remains of the famous departed till only the skeleton is left. It is one of the penalties of greatness—

‘The bones of Agamemnon are a show’

So has it fared with Balzac. If his relations with Zulma Carraud have so far appeared to escape attention, the reason doubtless is that they offer no very promising material to the compilers of *chromiques scandaleuses*. This explains why this delightful correspondence has suffered to remain so long in an unmerited penumbra. That these letters have at length been made accessible to us is a privilege for which we are indebted to two eminent ‘Balzaciens’ the Vicomte de Lowenjoul, who collected and piously preserved them, and M Marcel Bouteron the learned and indefatigable librarian of the Institut de France, who has arranged and anno-

tated them with a skill and a patience that do him signal honour

Zulma Tourangin, of whom so attractive an image emerges from the correspondence which follows, was an intimate friend of Balzac's sister Laure, whom she had known from childhood In 1816, she became the wife of a Captain Carraud, a former student of the École Polytechnique, the marriage taking place at Issoudun, in the department of the Indre In 1829, when the correspondence opens, Zulma Carraud and her husband, now a major, were quartered in the Military College at Saint-Cyr In the meantime, Laure, Balzac's sister, had married an engineer, also a Polytechnicien, and was living at Versailles Thus it often happened that, when visiting his sister, Balzac dropped in at Saint-Cyr which soon became for him a home, a never-failing sanctuary from the ills and injustices of an unfriendly and uncomprehending world The friendship always remained a friendship, and nothing more Nevertheless, it would hardly be appropriate to call it platonic, for, though the interchange of ideas played an important, indeed a predominant part in it, it was not so abstract that Zulma was not continually longing for the material presence of him who inspired it She yearned for his coming with the desire of the moth for the star, and often, alas, with as little chance of getting it The French have a phrase of their own for this kind of attachment, which is at once passionate and unincarnate they call it *amitié amoureuse* For a woman, to maintain her poise on such a delicate foot-hold, must call, one would think, for no small measure

of skill and prudence But Madame Carraud, aided by a profound affection for her children and ( notwithstanding his gout, his lethargy and his general 'unforthcomingness') for her husband, succeeded in keeping her balance

Easy-going, indifferent, or weary (he had spent seven of the best years of his life as a prisoner of war in England) as he may have been, it would seem, from any ordinary standpoint, that Carraud had a good deal to put up with Nevertheless, husband and wife seem to have got on excellently together To her Honoré is for ever sending his *tendresses*, to him a cordial grasp of the hand

It does not appear whether the Major saw all the letters that passed between his wife and her friend Perhaps (for he slept a good deal when he was not nursing his gout) he did not often bestir himself to read them Still, if he saw it, one cannot help wondering what he thought of the letter in which she told Balzac that, if the Fates had been kind to her, they would have put her in the same house with him and a *grisette*, she to share his ideas, the *grisette* his couch This, she said, would have been 'happiness in two volumes'

Her fondness for Balzac was quite unaccompanied by jealousy She was, in fact, much more concerned about his reputation, his *glorie*, than she was about his relations with other women She wanted to be his consoler, his comforter, and among the troubles she conjured him to lay at her feet, were his misadventures in love Her disapproval of the Marquise de Castries,

that very aristocratic butterfly, arose much less from jealousy of a rival, than from an apprehension lest, by allowing himself to be thus seduced to support the Royalist cause, he should gravely compromise his career. It was the Republican, not the woman, that protested! Perhaps the wisdom which prompted her to encourage her Honoré to join his precious Marquise and cure himself—as she foresaw he would—by mere satiety, may, by its very rationality, explain why the *amitié* between them always remained—*amitié* Such wisdom was admirable, but it was hardly feminine Zulma Carraud loved Balzac, but she did not tempt him, and Balzac, who would fall for a jewelled cane or a pretty signet-ring, could ‘resist everything except temptation’ Circe could do what she liked with him, with Minerva he kept his head

Balzac, though he was glad enough to betake himself to the Carrauds when fadone with weariness, or when his financial or sentimental embarrassments made it desirable for him to veil himself in temporary obscurity, had, as a rule, other fish to fry There were dissipations to which even backgammon and *reversi* at *la Poudrière*, or Frapesle, offered no successful counterattraction Too often the *volcaméria*, tended and watered by Madame Zulma’s own hands, budded and blossomed and despoiled itself for no eyes but hers, too often her lilac shed its scent, her roses blushed, in vain

At an early stage in their intercourse Madame Carraud—it is one of the most beautiful passages in all her letters—gently laid down the conditions of her friendship with Balzac She adhered to them She

## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

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had powerful allies her own strength of will, her sense of duty, her affection for her husband and her children And, perhaps, after a time (' for use almost can change the stamp of nature'), the indifference, the sexual indifference, of Balzac himself

Be this as it may, Zulma presents a beautiful and endearing figure, loyal, steadfast, unselfish, intellectually gifted, yet loving the simple things of life, the country, the woods, the fields, the winding stream, her garden and, above all, her home

As for Balzac, the kind of impression one gets of him from these pages is that of a Laocoön, encompassed about by incredible and invincible difficulties—financial, commercial, sentimental—mainly of his own creating He was always in debt, and always on the eve of bringing to pass some scheme that was to make him a rich man for the rest of his life And the scheme always just failed of success, with the result that he was deeper in the mire than ever—

O limèd soul, that, struggling to be free,  
Art more engaged!

And then with his printers and publishers he was always at loggerheads As for the printers, what the nature of the troubles was is not always clear If it had to do with his proofs—the necessity of reading his proofs was one of his favourite excuses for not turning up at the Carrauds'—there was something to be said for the printers At the *Bibliothèque Nationale* they will show you some of his corrected proofs They look as if a spider had woven its web in the middle of the page

and at the end of every filament is a word or a sentence replacing what has been crossed out in the text, hardly any of which is left standing Then again his books were pirated by thieving foreigners and thousands were sold without his getting a *sou* for them And then how he toiled, literally 'making the night joint labourer with the day,' often doing with as little as two hours' sleep out of the twenty-four, and dosing himself with coffee to keep awake

His labours were prodigious, and yet we question whether he was *always* quite so busy as he wished Madame Carraud to believe M Bouteron makes every excuse for him, never hesitating to give him the benefit of the doubt Yet, once at all events, even M Bouteron discovers his hero playing off, upon the unsuspecting Madame Carraud, the most flagrant piece of hypocrisy, declaring himself to be hunting for paper, when it was really Madame Hanska whom he was pursuing But, Balzac being a genius, everything must be forgiven him—his faithlessness, his vulgarity, his snobbery, his jewellery, his selfishness, even his bad writing

Balzac, as we have said, was for ever inventing and devising plans which, at long last, were to procure him a triumphant issue out of all his afflictions That these plans were bold and ingenious and picturesque, nobody could deny They had but one fault—they did not come off

There was nothing banal, for example, about that proposed exploitation of the Sardinian silver mines The means available to the ancient Romans for the

extraction of silver ore were of course primitive in comparison with those which modern science has discovered These half-worked mines he estimated—if he could get leave to exploit them—would bring him in 1,200,000 francs He obtained a sample of the ‘tailings,’ had it analysed, found it payable and, most indiscreetly imparted the good news to some Genoese gentleman with whom he had struck up an acquaintance That done, he pawned his jewellery, borrowed from his mother and an already impoverished female cousin, and set out for Sardinia, putting his obese and unwieldy body to all manner of hardships in order to possess himself of the promised treasure When he arrived, he found he was three days too late The Genoese had stolen a march on him He had obtained from the Government a concession empowering him to work the mines for his sole profit Then there was the famous signet-ring, with the mysterious inscription, *Bedouck*, which had been stolen from the Great Mogul by the English, a hundred years before Tons of gold and diamonds, he was assured, would be offered for the recovery of this precious relic The estimate was exaggerated Its real value was sixpence

Another idea of his, not referred to in this book, was to start a grocery concern in partnership with Théophile Gautier ‘I’m going to turn grocer,’ he said ‘And why not? Didn’t Mirabeau become a cloth merchant? I’ll have a nice-looking shop on the boulevard, and, on the shop-sign, “Balzac and Co, Wholesale and Retail Grocers” shall figure in gilt letters At the far end, Madame Sand shall sit in the cash-desk with a white

## BALZAC AND MADAME CARRAUD

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rose in her hair. Just inside the doorway, Théophile Gautier, garbed like a neophyte, will be seen roasting the coffee. Gérard de Nerval will weigh out the sugar; and I myself, Balzac in person, the boss, in snuff and otter-skin cap, will keep an eye on the whole establishment. The thing will turn out a gold-mine, or I'm a Dutchman.'

Alas, Balzac couldn't bring his friends up to the scratch, and that scheme fell through. 'To be a proper grocer's assistant,' said Balzac, 'you've got to wear your hair close-clipped, and that ass Gautier wouldn't part with his locks.'

Whether he was serious about the grocer's shop or not, he certainly was about growing pineapples under glass at his Jardin and putting on the market at five shillings apiece, a fruit that generally fetched five times that amount. There was also some scheme that had to do with sewage which (for every little half) he expected to bring in sixty pounds a year.

But all these schemes and many others, including the great bookselling and publishing business, ended in smoke, or in disaster. One of Balzac's most bitter complaints was that his books were boycotted by the Press. To remedy this injustice it is related that he gathered about him a company of friends, fellow men-of-letters, who also considered themselves unfairly treated in this respect. These gentlemen, who formed themselves into a sort of dining-club which met at regular intervals, pledged themselves to a policy of mutual logrolling. When any one of the dozen or so brought out a book, the rest were to acclaim it in terms

of the most fulsome eulogy. Somehow this plot also failed to mature. The dining-club decayed and came to an end, chiefly owing to the inability of the members to pay for their dinners.

At length, when things were looking black indeed, it began to be borne in upon him that there was now only one way out of the labyrinth of difficulties in which he was involved. Desperate ills need desperate remedies. Moreover, as his troubles increased, so did his power to cope with them diminish. The outlook was dark. In his extremity his thoughts reverted to Madame Carraud. What was his idea? Oh, it was quite in order. He wrote, in short, to say that he thought it high time that he gave up romance, love and so on, and, since it was better to marry than to go under, he thought of settling down to married life. Would Madame Zulma keep her eyes open for a suitable match? Only, the lady must be young, reasonably good-looking, and possessed of money, which she would have to put into his business.

Madame Carraud's reception of this cynical announcement and request, and the rebuke she administered to her *cher Honoré* will be found in one of the most charming of her letters, No. 125.

On the whole, these letters of his bear out pretty accurately the late Professor Saintsbury's summing up of his character. 'There was nothing real to him but Honoré de Balzac, Honoré de Balzac's works and schemes, and, in rare cases (of which Madame Hanska was the chief) Honoré de Balzac's loves.'

Nevertheless, in spite of his astounding egoism, he

entertained a very deep and sincere affection for Zulma Carraud Once, when she did not answer his letter as quickly as he deemed she might have done—he used to keep *her* waiting long enough!—he thought she must be ill and wrote off in no small trepidation Yes, he loved her, but he loved her like a sister He felt in her presence a peace that was not of this earth, and peace—until the hey-day in the blood was tame—was probably one of the things Balzac was least able to endure He was like those town-bred people who cannot sleep in the country because it is too quiet In vain she set before him the lure of tranquil hours, of the calm sequestered life, assuring him that it was only a coarseness of vision that could see in the sequence of ordinary, uneventful days, nothing but dull monotony The *nuances*, the delicate gradations were the thing Balzac, if he assented in principle to this charming *plaideoirie* in behalf of the delights of country life, was sparing in his indulgence of them How, after all, could it have been otherwise, how in his comparatively short span of life could he have built up that stupendous edifice if the circumstances of his life had been other than they were?

If his egoism obtrudes itself in nearly all his letters, if we divine it even when he is most prodigal of his assurances of affection and regard, there is at least one notable exception, one letter which surely sounds a different note It is his last The shadows from the hill-tops are lengthening, the evening is drawing near, the great task laid aside Now, perhaps for the first time in his life, he has a little breathing space, a little time

to look back along the way he has come And thus his thoughts revert to the woman who, despite himself, had been such an influence for good in his life, in whose home he had spent so many healing and happy hours, and who had loved him so truly and so steadfastly It was a rose that he had never plucked That was why at this late hour it was still blooming In this letter we see revealed, as in a mirror, all the grace and charm of her who was its inspiration ‘The flowers of affection,’ he says in this last of his letters to her, ‘pass all too quickly away, but not so the flower of my love for you That will never fade’ The editor of this volume does not err when he describes Zulma Carraud—‘la dame du Berry’—as Balzac’s surest friend, and one of the noblest of all those women that ever entered into the life of a man of genius

Balzac’s last letter to her was dated from Wierzchownia, March, 1850 On the 18th August of the same year he died Major Carraud was to live another fourteen years Though he figures but rarely in this correspondence the Major was, as the French say, ‘un brave homme’ a thoroughly sound and loyal fellow His military career, which was highly meritorious, won him several distinctions He became a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in 1815, after his repatriation from England (he was for eight years a prisoner in our hands, first at Malta, then at Chesterfield), then, two years later, a Chevalier of Saint Louis, and finally, on the 30th October, 1829, he was promoted Officier of the Legion of Honour Both Madame Carraud’s children pre-deceased her She herself lived to a green

old age beloved by all around her In a few exquisite and most moving words at the end of this book, M. Marcel Bouteron gives an account of her declining years There is nothing to add to that eloquent tribute, nothing, except to say that, as I read it, there stole irresistibly into my mind those lines which Wordsworth addressed to another child of Nature, who loved, like Zulma Carraud, the sweet and gracious simplicities of a country life To Zulma Carraud, no less than to 'the Young Lady,' to whom they are addressed, the poet's lines apply

Thy thoughts and feelings shall not die,  
Nor leave thee, when grey hairs are nigh,  
A melancholy slave,  
But an old age serene and bright,  
And lovely as a Lapland night,  
Shall lead thee to thy grave

J LEWIS MAY

## Preface

'IT IS NOT, it never has been, my desire to share in the charming relationship you offer to other women who, in divers ways, can boast a better claim to it than I The sentiment to which I aspire is on a higher plane I would have you so to hold me in your heart as to keep me, as it were, in reserve, then, if anything untoward should chance to cloud your happiness, any disappointment wound your affections, you will, if you recall me at that hour, see how I shall answer your appeal'

In these words it was that Mme Zulma Carraud defined that pure and lofty affection which, for more than thirty years, she lavished unstintingly on Honoré de Balzac How rare was the quality of that affection, Balzac's *Correspondance* in general, and the *Lettres à l'Étrangère* in particular, have already afforded us a glimpse, Balzac's private correspondence with Madame Carraud will reveal it in its fullest amplitude We shall follow the story of that friendship from day to day, down the passing years, from the Military School at Saint-Cyr to the Powder Factory at Angoulême, from the Powder Factory at Angoulême to the little Château at Frapesle, near Issoudun, and from Frapesle to Nohant-en-Graçay Thus we shall learn that that friendship was Balzac's surest comfort in his hours of lassitude of mind and body, his sweetest solace when the springs

of his moral being had run dry 'I should be almost tempted,' she wrote, 'were it not for the ill that must betide you, to thank all those who torture you, and, in so doing, fling you, so to speak, into our hearts again'

To begin with, Balzac found with the Carrauds, while all about him was restlessness and vexation of spirit, that which he lacked the most, that which he always lacked, namely, a home, a quiet home 'Do not imagine,' Madame Carraud would have him understand, 'that life must needs be for ever changing its outward form' The subtle shades, the *nuances*, are the most delightful thing about it Just think of all that is implied in the certitude that this same hour we find so sweet to-day, will strike for us again to-morrow and the next day, and so on to the end For sterile hearts, that would spell *ennui*, for the vulgar, just material wellbeing, but for you it should mean a refining, a sublimation of the spirit' She goes on to say that such happiness she herself knows, that both of them, she and her husband, experience it in the same degree 'I would not relinquish it,' she says in conclusion, 'for what, according to prevailing ideas, would be called the fullest of lives'

She was abundantly right, for it would have been difficult to fall in with anyone on life's road of nobler character or loftier understanding than her husband, Major Carraud of the Artillery Such, we are aware, was Balzac's own opinion Never, in his affections, did he separate husband and wife, and for both of them he maintained, as long as life lasted, the deepest, the most respectful, the most grateful affection

The Carrauds take up a large space in Balzac's life, and his work as a novelist is perpetually recalling them to our memory. It was to Madame Carraud that *La Maison Nucingen* was dedicated, and in these terms

'Is it not to you, Madame, whose rare and forthright understanding is as a treasure-house to your friends, to you, who are at once my public, and a most indulgent sister, that I should dedicate this book? Do me the honour, then, to accept it as a token of a friendship of which I am proud. You, and a few other spirits, rare as yourself, will understand what I had in mind when they read *La Maison Nucingen* in close connexion with *César Birotteau*. Is there not a whole system of social education implicit in the contrast between them?' The Major, also, was to have had his dedication in the *Scenes from the Life of a Soldier*, but Balzac died before writing the particular 'scene' which he intended to inscribe to his friend.

It was when he was with the Carrauds that a great deal of the *Comédie Humaine* was planned or composed. At Saint-Cyr he wrote the early part of *La Peau de Chagrin*, at Angoulême the conclusion of *Louis Lambert*, at Frapesle, near Issoudun, the opening chapters of *César Birotteau*. It was at La Poudrerie at Angoulême that Balzac heard the story of the *Voyage à Java*, and it was there, between two games of billiards, that he dashed off *La Grenadière*. It was Angoulême that he used as the background of many scenes in *Illusions Perdues*. *La Rabouilleuse* he placed at Issoudun, and it was Limoges, where Madame Carraud's sister had a house, that he made the home of Mme Graslin, as

described in the beginning of the *Curé de Village* Benassis, in the *Médecin de Campagne*, Evangelista in the *Contrat de Mariage* are names associated with the district of Angoulême Silas, the Christian name of Madame Carraud's own brother, was the name which Balzac gave to one of the Piedefers in the *Muse du département*, and in the *Lys dans la Vallée*, Frapesle has become a château

For Balzac, being at the Carrauds' was like being at home He worked there as much, or as little, as he liked, he was welcomed like one of the family, made much of, waited upon and kept amused

'Ah,' he once exclaimed, 'far better be at Angoulême, at la Poudrerie, living a staid and peaceful life, hearing the mills at work, getting knee deep in truffles, and learning from you how to send a billiard ball into the pocket, with plenty of laughter, plenty of talk !'

He tells his friends all his plans, his hopes, his love-affairs, all his worries and troubles Now and again, he even avails himself of their collaboration, and some of the social ideas of Balzac the politician, and of the *Médecin de Campagne*, may confidently be ascribed to Major Carraud 'If M Caraуд has any regard for me,' wrote Balzac in 1832, 'he will keep all his progressive ideas for me and I will proclaim them by working them into my system'

About the same time, he and the Carrauds had the idea of starting a big book-business The paper was to be manufactured by an Angoulême paper-merchant The Major was to give an eye to it

And, later on, in 1838, when he was venturing on a

speculation in Sardinian silver-ore, Balzac wrote as follows ‘M Carraud has decided me I told him what I thought about the matter from a scientific point of view Whether it’s a success or whether it’s a failure M Carraud told me that he rated such an idea as highly as the greatest of scientific discoveries’ ‘He is,’ wrote Balzac, ‘an intimate friend of Biot’s [the great mathematician], and I have often heard the latter declare what a loss it was to Science that M Carraud did not make more active use of his talents in that direction There is no scientific problem which he does not explain with admirable lucidity, when a question is put to him’

No less did Balzac value the intellectual gifts of Madame Carraud, especially her exceedingly delicate and unerring critical sense ‘You who have the courage,’ he wrote to her, ‘to pull up the weeds in my field, you whom I have never seen or heard without gleaning something to my advantage

But Madame Carraud’s critical activities were not confined exclusively to her friend’s literary works They were also applied, with uncompromising frankness, to his political opinions, as the correspondence which follows will abundantly testify Madame Carraud would have liked to see her great man beyond the reach of mean little political devices, and it was with a truly Republican ardour that she upbraided him for joining forces with the Royalists in order to conciliate the favours of the Marquise de Castries She recalled that Major Carraud, years before, had compromised his career by adhering to his conscientious

determination not to vote for a life consulate It made her blush to realise that Balzac fell short of that high standard But her admiration for him as a writer suffered no abatement She placed Balzac above Goethe, and considered *Louis Lambert* a greater work than *Faust*

Among the women with whom Balzac was associated in his lifetime Madame Carraud, who was a friend, and nothing more than a friend, deserves a place apart, a special niche, for hers was a friendship so pure and ardent as to possess the driving force of a great passion.

MARCEL BOUTERON

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*Part I*

SAINT-CYR L'ÉCOLE

1829—1831



## Saint-Cyr l'École

Zulma Louvigny, and Laure de Balzac, Honoré's sister, had been friends from childhood. In 1816, Zulma had married a Captain Carraud<sup>1</sup> of the Artillery, formerly a student at the École Polytechnique. The marriage took place at Issoudun when Zulma was twenty years old.

In 1820 Laure, then a girl of nineteen, married another student of the Polytechnique named Surville, an engineer. Later on, it so happened that the exigencies of the Service brought the two families together. In 1826, the Survilles went to live at No. 2, rue Mantepas, Versailles, where Laure's husband had a position as a first-class engineer in the Department of Roads and Bridges. There, next door to them so to speak, at Saint-Cyr, they rediscovered their friends the Carrauds who, for fully eight years, had been living in the dreary looking buildings of the Lycée Militaire. Balzac, when he went to Versailles to see his sister, extended his journey on several occasions to Saint-Cyr to visit the Carrauds, who always gave him a cordial welcome.

When his work keeps him in his hermitage at No. 1, rue Cassini in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, he expresses his apologies and, more particularly, his regrets.

<sup>1</sup> Balzac, with almost invincible regularity, gets the names of his friends wrong, even his closest friends. The Carrauds, for example—he nearly always spells their name Carrud. We have kept them as they are in the original.

[ i ]

[ Paris ] 17th April [ 1829 ]

MADAME,

Have you sometimes said, ' M Honoré is a long time sending me that oval picture which he promised me for my glove-box? And my screen? And my match-holder? Better at promising than at performing, is he? etc , etc '

I don't go so far as to flatter myself that I *have* been the object of these reproaches , but if you have thought of me at all, I feel certain you will be generous enough to excuse my apparent inattention If you wish always to be borne in mind, you should give commissions to the people whom you love, for I may tell you that there is nothing in the world so eloquent and so tyrannical as remembering something which you ought to do, yet leave undone I was sitting by the fire this morning, busily engaged in sealing letters, and every time I took a fresh match, the two dogs with which you adorned my pretty little piece of furniture began to bark at me And that for the hundredth time !

No, M. Honoré is no scatterbrain , but for the last month he has had to toil as hard as he could to finish off a work to which he is not putting his name Artists paint pictures which they do not sign, and also pictures which they exhibit at the salon to make a name for themselves I am such an one

You shall have a screen It gave me too much pleasure to incur this debt for it not to be a corresponding pleasure to discharge it Moreover, if you put your match-stand and your screen at Frapesle among all the

nice things you are taking there, there will be a friendly bait there that I should not be able to resist To be borne in memory by a gifted spirit is one of my most cherished dreams

I am bringing an action to recover possession of some copies of my book and, until the case is finished, I cannot give myself the pleasure of sending you one, for I tell you candidly I am not rich enough to buy one

Please convey to M Caraud the remembrances of an author who grows more careworn and more of a misanthropist every day, but who, nevertheless, has not forgotten that sometimes he laid aside his troubles at Saint-Cyr

Do not forget to mention me to M Périollas, whom my most affectionate regards attend, and for yourself, Madame, please accept all the sweetness and sincerity a compliment can convey

HONORÉ BALZAC

*Balzac never omitted to get his friend to read his books as soon as ever they appeared Thus he took her, at the end of 1829, a copy of his Physiologie du Mariage<sup>1</sup> But the tone of the book was highly displeasing to Madame Carraud, and Balzac at once set about doing his utmost to dissipate the unfavourable impression*

[ 2 ] [ Paris, end of 1829 ]

The feeling of aversion which you experienced, Madame, when reading the early part of the book which I brought you, does too much honour to you and to the delicacy of your perception for anyone, even

<sup>1</sup> *Physiologie du mariage*, by a young bachelor (December, 1829)

its author, to feel aggrieved thereat It proves that you do not belong to a world of deception and perfidy, that you have no knowledge of a society which lays a withering touch upon everything, and that you are worthy of the solitude in which mankind ever attains the loftiest heights of greatness, nobility and purity

It was perhaps a misfortune for the author that you did not resist that preliminary feeling of repugnance, by which every innocent soul is visited, at the recital of a crime, the portrayal of a disaster, when reading Juvenal, for example, or Rabelais, or Persius, or Boileau, for I fancy that, as you went on, you would have laid aside your quarrel with him, as you read some powerful lesson, some vigorous pleading in behalf of woman and morality But how can I find fault with you for evincing a repugnance which does you honour? How could I be vexed with you merely for displaying your womanliness? I therefore very humbly crave your pardon for that involuntary offence, against which, if you remember, I had provided in anticipation, and I beg you to rest assured that the verdict, rigorous though it is, which you have pronounced upon my work can never detract in the slightest degree from the friendship which you have permitted me to entertain for you To that friendship allow me to bear witness yet once again, for I assure you that sentiments frankly expressed by a friend concerning a deed which he holds to be deserving of censure, can only draw yet closer the bonds of mutual confidence and esteem

H B

*There is no denying it, Balzac's labours allowed him no leisure He begs that Madame Carraud will at all events not leave him without tidings, or fail to remember him, when occasion brings her to Paris*

[ 3 ]

[ Paris, before the 3rd January 1830 ]

I hope you will not be lacking in charity towards an unhappy wretch who slaves day and night until he's nearly dead If you come to Paris, you won't forget me, will you? Just imagine! I've undertaken to do two books at once,<sup>1</sup> not to mention a number of articles I have promised that these two books shall be out, one by the middle of February, the other some time in April, and I'm just starting on them

The days melt in my hands, like ice in the sun I'm not living, I'm wearing myself out, dreadfully But whether one dies of hard work or anything else, it's all one Twenty times I've picked up my hat and gloves to make for Saint-Cyr, and twenty times some business or other has cropped up to stop me

But even if I risk losing a chance of making money, I shall come, I hope, one of these days, to enjoy a little breathing space in your company, away from work and worry Moreover, you've punished me pretty severely for what was my own misfortune, for you haven't written me any of those comforting words which help a man to keep going I was told you had been having a lot of trouble, and I shared it with you

<sup>1</sup> *Scènes de la Vie privée* and *Les Trois Cardinaux*

in the spirit M Boïget<sup>1</sup> also told me you had not been well, and I forgave you for not writing to me, but not for leaving me in the dark about your illness

If you come to Paris, let me know the day, so that I can make myself free for the occasion Then, if my proof-correcting and the manuscripts I have to deliver allow me to survive, I will come, between the 3rd and the 6th, to Saint-Cyr and pay you my belated New Year's visit

Remember me to your gentlemen, and accept the sincere expression of my liveliest friendship and unwavering gratitude

DE BALZAC

*Mme Carraud's visit kept being put off Balzac grumbles at the delay In the event, it was he who paid the first visit, snatching the earliest moment of leisure that offered, to go to Saint-Cyr and get first-hand news of his friends*

[ 4 ]

[ Paris ] 14th April [ 1830 ]

MADAME,

You have been desperately hard on me I am in complete ignorance of how things are going at Saint Cyr, whether well or ill, so that I have only been able to share your feelings in the vaguest possible way, the only way open to a man that has been moiling day and night to keep body and soul together Ink, pens and paper I cannot bear the sight of, and anything

<sup>1</sup> Auguste Borget, a painter of Eastern scenes, and a friend of Balzac's *La Messe de L'Athéée* is dedicated to him Born at Issoudun in 1802, Borget died at Châteauroux in 1877

that looks even remotely like an idea makes me shudder, so that really it was for you to send me a line

Anyhow, I shall come and see you this week because I want to bring you the *Scènes de la vie privée*, which came out yesterday I must thank you for taking out a subscription to *Le Feuilleton*<sup>1</sup> I had been hoping every day to go and see you and to tell you that it was to be a complimentary subscription, like making a present of a book But you know what Paris is, just like one of those quicksands on the Loire As soon as you set your foot on one, there you stick Yesterday I had a business deal to put through, to-morrow there's to be a most attractive *soirée* at which la Malibran is to sing, this morning there was a bachelor lunch, to-night some urgent work that must be done And so the gulf swallows up my life, a life which, spent in solitude, would be full and glorious

However, don't run away with the idea that I am a profligate I have worked terrifically, and my debauches are all bookish ones In June, I look forward to asking your acceptance of *The Three Cardinals*, which may perhaps prove not unworthy of attention

If I can get away, I shall come early, and if I could consult my own inclinations, I should stay on at that Saint Cyr of yours, which you find so dismal

My very sincere and respectful regards,

H DE BALZAC

My best remembrances to Monsieur Caraud and Captain Périolas

<sup>1</sup> *Le Feuilleton des journaux politiques* to which Balzac was a contributor

In June, Balzac leaves Paris for a holiday at Gréz-sur-  
Loing in Touraine, but he makes a point of writing to Madame  
Carraud before starting.

[ 5 ] [ Paris ] Saturday morning [ 5th June 1830 ]

I am sorry to be setting out on rather a long journey without having been to thank you in person for your kind letter and for all your goodness to me. Indeed I've hardly time even to say good-bye to you by letter. Nevertheless, I hope you will not be too hard upon a poet whose conduct is a little incalculable. I am going to work. If you go to Berry, send me a line to Tours *poste restante* and, sometime in July or August, I would come back by way of Issoudun, for, as you know, all roads lead to Paris.

Please remember me to your gentlemen, and give them my affectionate regards.

If I don't return via Issoudun, I shall at any rate come by way of Saint-Cyr.

Farewell, Madame, and be assured that among all the impressions I am going forth to seek, the memory of you will never leave me.

My respectful regards

DE BALZAC

The July Revolution did not drag Balzac away from the pleasures of fertile Touraine. When, however, he did get back to Paris again, he found the Carrauds "in a state of great anxiety." What was going to happen to Saint-Cyr and its staff under the new régime and to all the literary world by which Balzac was so penitently attached, etc., etc.

*it was in those memories of the Revolution and the Empire in which he so especially delighted? What a number of Balzac's stories were inspired by conversations at Saint-Cyr<sup>1</sup>! L'Adieu, Chabert at Eylau, and that great novel, La Bataille, which never saw the light!*

Major Carraud, the Director of Studies, had fought in Italy, at Naples and in Calabria. He had been a prisoner of war in England. Captain Périolas, an Artillery instructor, had knocked about all over Europe and had fought at Wagram. Captain Chapuis had commanded a company of grenadiers at Waterloo, not to mention Colonel Nacquart (brother of the Dr Nacquart who used to attend Honoré<sup>1</sup>) and several others.

Balzac had a great liking for these various military men whom he enlivened with his inexhaustible high spirits. Sometimes he would stay several days at the School to snatch a rest between two bouts of proof correcting, or to work up a story. Several pages of *La Peau de Chagrin* were written at Saint-Cyr. But backgammon and reversi, carried on to the accompaniment of story-telling and literary and political dissertation, were more in evidence than the writing-table, and Balzac, who was now beginning to develop his royalist ideas, would enter into prolonged discussions with Madame Carraud, who was all for the Republic. The July Revolution put an end to these happy days. Things took an ill turn for the school, where sympathies were suspected of being with the fallen King, and it looked as if Carraud, little though he deserved it, was going to be numbered among the initial victims.

<sup>1</sup> His Correspondence was given in No 4 of the *Cahiers Balzaciens* (Lapinc.)

*Balzac at once set to work to ward off the peril He wrote to Madame Carraud placing his good offices, as well as those of a somnambulist, at her disposal*

[ 6 ] Paris Wednesday, 8 a m 29th September 1830

MADAME,

Do, I beseech you, come to Paris<sup>1</sup> on Friday I will let you know everything the somnambulist has brought to light<sup>2</sup> I shall be at home till five in the evening

Heavens, how good and how scrupulous you are<sup>1</sup>

To-morrow I dine with the War Minister's private secretary, a good friend and good company, who would do anything I asked him You've still got time to send me a concise note, or to come and see me to-morrow morning How often we are compelled to do people good against their will Let me shoulder all the burden of this business Tell me what you think

I owe you a thousand thanks for taking all that trouble about *le Temps* I got the editorship in the simplest manner E[ mile ] de Girardin, a friend of mine, introduced me to Coste, who, after reading my newspaper articles,<sup>3</sup> and my book,<sup>4</sup> seemed very anxious to have me But I will tell you about the whole affair

<sup>1</sup> 1, rue Cassini (near the Observatory) where Balzac was then living

<sup>2</sup> Balzac had absolute faith in somnambulists He consulted them on every possible occasion 'It's a sure way,' he said, 'of not being taken in by anyone' *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, 252, 261, 269

<sup>3</sup> Articles in *Le Voleur*, *La Mode*, *Le Feuilleton des journaux politiques* and *La Silhouette*

<sup>4</sup> The *Physiologie du mariage* or the *Scènes de la Vie privée*

by word of mouth There are too many details, and my letter would never end I should be taking up too much of your time by half

If you come to-morrow morning, you might perhaps see the somnambulist in her trance It would be well worth while The parcel<sup>1</sup> has this moment come Dr Chapelain<sup>2</sup> cannot give me an appointment before to-morrow I will fix it for one o'clock and stay at home till midday

Let us hope, Madame, that you, like all great, high-minded people, will eventually be able to live your own life, a life rich in true emotions, without which, I am obliged to say, wealth and good fortune are but words These are the wishes of a friend who is sincerely attached to you, and who associates himself with all your hopes and all your desires That being so, I could wish that you had a little less of that reserve which prevents you from speaking out about things M Caraud should have the place he ought to occupy It's an error to engage in a duel with people in armour when we ourselves are naked

I am working day and night, for things are getting

<sup>1</sup> This parcel no doubt contained the various things required by the somnambulist 'If you would like to try a consultation,' wrote Balzac to Madame Hanska, 'you must send me a little bit of cotton lint which you should put during the night on your daughter's stomach and which *she herself* should wrap up in a piece of paper, which *she* should put into one of your letters' *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, I, 261

<sup>2</sup> This was the Dr Chapelain to whom Balzac wrote in 1832, the cholera year, to suggest to him the idea of getting a somnambulist to inquire into the causes of the scourge (Correspondence, I, 147)

more involved and, unfortunately, fate is dealing so roughly with me that I feel some compunction about offering my friends an attachment that could only be a burden to them

Adieu, Madame Tell M Périolas that no one longs for his recovery more ardently than I, save possibly yourself Present my compliments to M Carraud, and keep the better part for yourself.

Your sincere friend,

HONORÉ

Mme O'Reilly<sup>1</sup> will not be back for another twelve days

*In October the political horizon is still dark, and Balzac is still anxious about what is going to happen to his friends*

[ 7 ]

Paris 15th October 1830

Attach yourself to the École Polytechnique, for it is almost certain that Saint-Cyr will be done away with Here is the *Bulletin* for to-day.

It was a great relief to hear from you that the Captain [Périolas] is better. Ever since I saw him, the picture of him in his suffering kept haunting me like a ghost That is what comes of being of an affectionate nature and of being too shy to tell people how fond you are of them You lose all the advantages of friendship and retain all its trials!

You write me very seldom If you knew all the troubles that beset me and with how much courage I must needs gird myself to keep going, and to do my

<sup>1</sup> Mme O'Reilly's husband was on the staff of *Le Temps*

work, you would be more liberal with your words of consolation It is a help to hear someone saying, 'Courage ! Stick to it !'

Your note has been forwarded to the proper quarter, but I have some things to tell you about that matter which cannot be committed to paper

As regards the *Temps*, the position is very delicate I do not, as a rule, allow myself to be prejudiced against a man, but I confess that when I saw M C[oste] and looked into the matter, I believed all the ill that people say about him It seemed to me that M O[dilon] B[arrot]'s fortune was very seriously involved and I pitied Madame O [Barrot] for being in the power of an individual whom I take to be so deep a schemer I had, therefore, a difficult part to play I have not had enough experience of life to be able to keep my feelings to myself So I put your letter in an envelope and addressed it to your friend, saying that I had been keeping it during her absence, but that the reception I had had from M C[oste] was of a nature to discourage me from asking him any personal favour Madame O [Barrot] kept silence for a week and then, yesterday, I had an invitation to attend her *soirées* I shall go merely so as not to refuse, but without any intention of taking an interest in the proceedings I owed you an account of all that, Madame, because you were so kind as to give me the introduction, and I hope that what I have done in the matter will meet with your approval

Adieu, Madame, I have so much to do, I am so deeply involved, that I rely on your kindness and indulgence to excuse all my shortcomings I ought to have gone

to see you at Saint-Cyr, and I ought to have more than seven minutes to give to this letter, which will never sufficiently tell you how attached and devoted to you is

H DE B

*Try as he may, Balzac does not succeed in getting a moment to go and see his friends His unremitting labours on La Mode, La Silhouette, La Caricature and the Revue de Paris, allow him no respite*

[ 8 ] [ Paris ] Friday morning [ 26th November 1830 ]

MADAME,

I am again sorry to say that I shall be unable to come to Saint Cyr to-morrow. All the week I had been buoying myself up with the hope of doing so, and behold, yesterday, I get a letter summoning me to attend a meeting of shareholders in connexion with an affair in which I am concerned as nominee for my mother. It is one of the properties I transferred to her, an insignificant instalment of the many sacrifices<sup>1</sup> she made for me in order to preserve my good name. It would ill become me not to put aside everything where she is concerned. It would be ingratitude on my part. Then, being just now compelled to make gigantic efforts in order to live and to help friends who are worse off than I, I am working night and day, hardly allowing myself two hours' sleep. For example, on Saturday I have to revise a long article for the *Revue de Paris* and to do my work for *La Mode* with which I am all behind. Forgive me, then, with your

<sup>1</sup> In 1828, in connexion with his printing and smelting works

usual kindness, if I thus postpone the pleasure of seeing you How great the necessity of the moment must be, is evinced by the fact that M<sup>r</sup> Borget and I are coming expressly to consult you about our business and try to win you over If it is convenient to you we will come for certain one day next week

Our country, Madame, is getting into a very grave position I am aghast at the struggle which is looming ahead,—I am saying this between ourselves, this time—passion I see on every hand, and reason nowhere If France fights, I shall not be among those who will refuse her their strong right arm or their talents, whatever some of one's friends may say It is then that Science, in which we have made such remarkable progress, and courage, will help France to gain the victory But what will be the outcome, and how shall we be able to control those elements in the body-politic who labour under a grievance and are ready to revolt? Ah, Madame, the number of so-called patriots for whom true patriotism is a dead letter, is very great No one is willing to subscribe to the mediating principles of which I have given you a brief outline We are between the liberal extremists and the legitimist faction, who are going to join forces in order to overthrow the existing order

Do not accuse me of a want of patriotism because my intelligence enables me to take accurate stock of men and things In every revolution, the genius of the government consists in bringing about a fusion of men and things That is why Napoleon and Louis XVIII were both such clever men Both

all parties together in France, one by force and the other by craft, because one rode on a horse and the other in a carriage To-day, worse luck, we have a government without a plan That is what upsets me, and every day that comes and goes robs me of another hope Oh, if you were in Paris, in the centre of men and affairs, you would soon change that isolation policy of yours Not a minute but something would occur to rub you up the wrong way

Adieu, Madame, rely at all times on the sincerity of my affection, and on a heart whose fondest desire is to enter into your views

My best regards to the Captain [ Pérolas ] and Monsieur Carraud

*All through the latter part of the year 1830, Balzac was exceedingly busy with politics. The accession to power of the Citizen-King aroused the political ambitions of the younger generation, ambitions which had been kept in check by the gerontociacies of Louis XVIII and Charles X. Balzac was on the qui vive. Will he have a share in the government like other men of his age, like Thiers or Montalivet, for example? From the 26th September, 1830, to the 29th March, 1831, he figures as a contributor to *Le Voleur*, a journal owned by his friend Émile de Girardin, giving, in the guise of 'Paris Letters,' a very full account of the politics of the day and assessing the pros and cons of the Revolution of July. Madame Carraud, who was a very uncompromising liberal, is disturbed at what she considers the excessive importance attached by Balzac in his survey to Monarchist ideas.*

[ 9 ] [ Paris ] Saturday morning [ end of 1830 ]

MADAME,

I have received your letter<sup>1</sup> and, though it gave me a scolding, I was very glad to get it, since it is a proof of the interest you take in me Putting aside any attempt to show you how ungenerous it is to judge a whole building by a single stone, to find fault with me for expressing a view which has necessarily to accord with those of the subscribers to the paper, and not to differentiate between the labourer and the man, I will say that the main thing about the Paris Letters is that they do tell the truth about men and things and that they aim, not so much at expressing an opinion as at giving an accurate notion of the trend of things in the political world, and of the clash and conflict of ideas

In addition to this necessary portrayal of events, there are the ideas emanating from the various departments of State and from the persons who compose the government If you thought I was speaking for myself, you were wrong It is the men you would like to see in office who speak thus Take any phrase, any idea you like—it reflects the views of the most influential people I freely admit that I cannot imagine how it would be possible to have representative government without the freedom of opposition which is its essential characteristic The storm which rages to-day, will always rage You take the view that because the government moves, its motion is in itself a disaster

<sup>1</sup> It has not survived

What you say about usurpation is very remarkable  
The foremost people on the *National*, the *Globe* and the  
*Temps* say that if the Duc de B[rogue] hadn't existed,  
it would have been necessary to invent him

But without attempting a defence of the ideas I have expressed, I will, if you will allow me, give you a brief notion of the system of government to which my whole life will conform It is a profession of faith as immutable as it can be, it is in a word my political conscience, my plan, my idea of things, and for it I have a right to claim as much respect as I myself entertain for the opinions of others My political life will be entirely devoted to securing the triumph of this idea, to developing it, and when I speak seriously about the future of my country, there is nothing I write or say which does not conform to it

France, then, must be a constitutional monarchy, with an hereditary Royal Family It must have an extraordinarily powerful House of Peers representing property, with every possible guarantee of heredity and privilege, the nature of which will be a matter for discussion Then there should be a Second Chamber, an elected body, which should represent the interests of the class intermediate between the aristocracy, the highest social grade, and what I will call the common people

Legislation on the whole, and in spirit, should be directed to the greatest possible enlightenment of the masses, the non-propertied classes, working men, proletarians, etc., in order that as large a number as possible may attain to the comfortable standard of

living enjoyed by the intermediate class The masses however should be under the strongest possible control They should have individually every possible opportunity and facility for securing enlightenment, aid, wealth and protection, and no idea, no formula, no compromise should incite them to turbulence

The well-to-do class should be given the widest possible liberty, for they are property-owners, they have something to keep, and everything to lose They can never kick over the traces

The Government should have as much power as possible In this way the government and the well-to-do middle-class would be interested in the welfare of the lower orders and in increasing the middle-class, which is the real backbone of all governments

Even if the wealthy classes, the hereditary aristocracy of the Upper House, become morally corrupt and create abuses, they are a necessary part of every society and must be borne with for the sake of their compensating advantages

Such is my plan, my idea It combines the good points and philanthropic aims of several systems People may laugh and call me a liberal or an aristocrat, I shall never give up this system of mine I have meditated long and deeply on the matter of social constitutions, this one seems to me to be, I will not say the best, but the least defective

Time and space alike are lacking for the full development of my ideas, which I have but adumbrated I shall most likely run out and see you at Saint-Cyr on Tuesday But you know the uncertainties

Excuse me for being so brief, but I have a tremendous  
lot on hand and am working night and day

Your devoted friend,

HONORÉ.

*Balzac's labours, his political ambitions, his twofold candidature at Cambrai and Fougères absorb him to such an extent that he forgets all about the ties of friendship and the literary tasks to which he had set his hand, and the first few sheets he had written of *La Peau de Chagrin* are getting thick with dust*

[ 10 ]

[ Paris, after the 8th June, 1831 ]

*Bon Dieu, Madame, I have been treating you very badly, for I confess I have not as yet been able to find a minute to read the manuscript you sent me, and I know how important it is to you, and how urgent, to place it*

*My nights and days have been taken up with extraneous tasks and the whole thing is summed up in a nutshell when I tell you that I haven't added a line to *La Peau de Chagrin* since the few pages I wrote at Saint-Cyr*

*The political work entailed by my putting up for two constituencies has taken up the whole of my time I am obliged to carry on, at one and the same time, my literary work, which as you know is my bread and butter, and my political activities, so that I often give way under it all Now, you see, I am obliged to sacrifice some of my time to social obligations, and I go out a great deal more than I really ought to*

But you, not a single paltry line have I had from you, not a word to bring me consolation and to sustain me in the struggle that is consuming me If I do not write to my friends, it is not that I bear them the less in mind

The manuscript in which our dear Lieutenant Dupac<sup>1</sup> is interested is still on my table, an eloquent reproach, as it were, addressed by me to myself

However, the book-trade has not yet settled down enough for there to be any hope of placing this translation, so I am not very greatly to blame, and I shall have to wait some little time yet before I can take any really useful and active steps in the matter

You have no doubt received three copies of my pamphlet<sup>2</sup> for delivery in the proper quarters? Do not imagine, Madame, that I could ever forget my friends at Saint-Cyr But since last I saw you, I have been doing nothing but write, think, and rush about I am knocked up, very nearly, and I am going to have a fortnight in the country in order to steady myself and to finish off that wretched task, which seems unending

My affectionate regards to Captain Périollas and Monsieur Caraud, remember me to the *reversi* players, and accept the assurance of my respectful regard, as well as of my profound devotion

DE BALZAC

<sup>1</sup> Referred to later (on pp 215 and 225) C L C Dupac was a former student at Saint-Cyr (1827-1829)

<sup>2</sup> *Enquête sur la politique des deux ministères* Cf *Le Catéchisme Social*, preceded by an article entitled *Du Gouvernement moderne*, edited and annotated by Bernard Guyon, Paris, La Renaissance du Livre 1833, 8vo



*Part II*  
THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME  
*1831-1834*



## The Powder Factory at Angoulême

*Balzac's efforts on behalf of his friends came to nothing. The Major was informed that his post had been abolished, and, on the 30th July, 1831, he was appointed Inspector of the Powder Factory at Angoulême. Meanwhile Mme Carraud, as yet unaware of this appointment, writes to Balzac as follows*

[ 11 ]

Frapesle,<sup>1</sup> 29th July, 1831

No presentiment warned us that we were seeing each other for the last time, and yet, Honoré, nothing is more true. For the last time my imagination has kindled itself from the glow of yours! Maybe you will reproach yourself for neglecting me so, now that you can no longer make amends. Here am I again so to speak at the threshold of my life, knowing not at all what the fates have in store for me, or whether they will hurl me

All my self-respect, all my tenderer feelings are sorely wounded—my habits, my connexions, my affections have been rudely shattered. All this reacts upon my *amour-propre*. I must give up for ever all idea of that contemplative life that would have made me so happy, and to which I was feeling my way here in this sombre prison of Saint-Cyr. Paris was there quite near, I felt

<sup>1</sup> Frapesle, near Issoudun, belonged to Madame Carraud's father.

it, when you and a few others came from time to time to remind me that I had not been born to live a life of passive vegetation Your visits afforded sustenance to my mind and pleasure to my heart All that, I must now renounce . You, who have studied woman and essayed to portray her, you will never know what greatness of soul is needed to live a commonplace life, when her feelings are wounded That, you could only learn from one of those rare and gifted spirits who are sensitive to everything, and that will never be granted you, my poor Honoré Your fame puts all the women with whom you are brought in contact into competition with one another, and once that kind of passion is aroused where women are concerned, it is good-bye to everything I did not say a word to you about my departure, because I thought I should be coming back Then I had your election plans in mind and took it that you were not in Paris Carraud's honesty was bound to be his downfall, and it has After every revolution, the wire-pullers get busy The new régime was bound to be fatal to my poor husband, who not only takes no protective measures against these schemers, but looks upon them as so many strange animals , and he a man of fifty ! He thoroughly deserved to lose his berth, and yet how proud I am of his straightforwardness, his disregard of self For fuller particulars, I refer you to Saint-Cyr, whither he has now returned, and where the good Captain [ Périolas ] is still remaining And I'm sorry for him, too This break up of all that he's been accustomed to may impair his health, and it was my

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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privilege to look after him, and a valuable privilege it was, such as I would not have exchanged for any other

Tell me what you are doing, dear Honoré, tell me about your hopes and plans, so that I may not become altogether a stranger to the interests of your life Time, and the difference in our mode of life, sets up only too many barriers between us Let some reminder, be it never so rare, come now and again to tell me that we are not dead to one another Perhaps, in years to come, I shall return to Paris again I should like to feel that I owed it to you not to be too hopelessly bewildered at it all If, through your kind tuition, I were still able to rise to the necessary height, great would be the pleasure with which I should testify my gratitude

Now would have been the time for us to retire for the rest of our lives Carraud desired it above everything, and I, too, was willing This latest affair has made me take none too favourable a view of men in general, and I feel anything but anxious to enter upon any new experiences But difficulties of a wholly insurmountable nature compel us to leave here, and drive us into exile If, in a few years' time, you have not grown quite oblivious of the sincere affection I feel towards you, I shall endeavour to prevail on you to come and spend a few months here You will have as much time to yourself as you wish You will find a little rivulet to inspire you, a wildish bit of country, but a welcome oasis of cool fresh greenness amid the sun-scorched plain that surrounds us Then, everything to make you comfortable that friendship can possibly

devise will be unstintingly lavished upon you I expect by that time I shall be pretty well provincialised, but you will be able to discover the real 'me' under that disguise And the beautiful nights we get here—I will not speak of them They are what will please you most, I am sure No dampness to scare you away and drive you indoors, nothing to mar the peace of your meditations Meanwhile, until that day comes, I shall probably go South, very possibly to Montpellier The journey by way of Lyons is delightful If Nîmes and its antiquities, Avignon and Vaucluse have any temptations for you, you will have friends in the neighbourhood who will welcome you with joy And if we went to Corsica, there, at any rate, is abundant matter for romance I am prepared to put up with any sort of destination The Alps, the fastnesses of the Pyrenees, it is all one to me, I care too little about things now to be glad or sorry Besides, have I not memories enough to go on with for a long time to come? What care I about a lot of houses in a row, the smoothness of the pavement, the talent of a *prima donna*, which are the sole advantages of big towns? I have quite made up my mind not to have anything to do with the inhabitants

Adieu, Honoré, I am in too feverish a state of mind to have any sequence in my ideas I have not yet got used to facing this new state of affairs I have had such a shock that it will be a long time before I get over the effects of it I won't worry you any more with the aberrations of my muddled brain As I am quite sure that, in spite of all, you will have realised how deeply I am attached to you, I do not worry about the rest

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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When I learn something definite about what is going to happen, I will let you know immediately, confident that I shall never find you indifferent to my lot My best love to Laure Shall I never see her again either? How sorry I am now that I neglected the few chances of seeing her that came my way It is in times like these that we feel the pangs of self-reproach If I had only known that I should have to leave Paris so soon, I should have made far better use of my time

*Very shortly afterwards Madame Carraud learned of the decision which was to send her an exile to the provinces, far away from Paris, to the Powder Factory at Angoulême She immediately wrote off to Balzac*

[ 12 ]

Frapesle, 6th August 1831

I shall be here till round about the 10th September, Honoré, and I shall be very delighted to receive you You must come armed with plenty of tolerance My father, whose house it is, is an old man, and all his servants are old You will be alarmed at the lack of discipline here At Frapesle, the best thing is to live out of doors But the pleasure you will give me will lend you courage I count, then, on some pleasant moments We are going to Angoulême Carraud has been appointed inspector of the Powder Factory there The Government are giving me a house all to myself, where I shall have a garden most delightfully situated In this solitary house of mine, I shall have a spare room I am enchanted with all the arrangements I am not in the town itself, but some two or three miles

outside it. Now I am going to strive to forget all about Saint-Cyr and its mortifications, and with a good chance of doing it, if only I can keep in touch, so far away from Paris, with you and some other special friends

Adieu, Honoré I am not writing you a letter because some ladies are giving up a day to me and I must not leave them; but when you are here, we will talk !

In all friendship,

ZULMA

I don't possess a seal<sup>1</sup> Get one made for me, one you like yourself I don't want to pay more than twenty francs

*Mme Carraud, then, settled herself in as well as she could with her husband and her son Ivan, aged five (he was born at Saint-Cyr on the 19th October, 1826) in this house at Angoulême, waiting for Balzac, to whose coming she looked to mitigate the early stages of her exile. But Balzac did not come His literary work, the publication of La Peau de Chagrin, and business in connexion with his parliamentary candidature kept him in Paris*

[ 13 ] 8th November [ 1831 ] La Poudrerie. Angoulême

The 20th August, the 20th September, and, now, the 20th October have gone by. I have waited for you in vain, not a line, not so much as a token It is too bad,

<sup>1</sup> Everybody knows what a passion Balzac had for seals He had specimens of all sorts engraved by the famous Perry of the Palais Royal with Hebraic devices, emblems, earl's coronets, armorial bearings, etc *Balzaciana* No 1 (published by Lapina) contains the very amusing story of *Bedouck*, the most famous of these talismans

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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Honoré, and I have felt it, though I have not put you down among the 'friends' who discarded that title as soon as we left Saint-Cyr

One thing, however, has softened the sting of your forgetfulness and that is that I take it to be wholly due to some fresh successes you have no doubt won, to an extra dose of good fortune, and so I tell myself that it is not your fault You will always have me when you feel you want someone to confide in Carraud says you were afraid of getting provincialised, but, dear Honoré, though Paris may minister to your innate love of fine living, do you find friendship there as true as that which you would have found at Frapescle? Have you, then, nothing left for your exiled friends? Don't for a moment think I am so hurt as to be angry with you No, indeed, things could never come to such a pass as that Forget all about us if it would make you happier to do so, only vouchsafe to allow us not to forget *you*, to allow us to remind you that we are here, and always at hand if at any time something should mar the harmony of your existence and awaken the need for a devoted friend to make it whole again

I know and appreciate the difference in our positions you an actor in a world that welcomes you with open arms, that expects you to give it a hundred times more than it gives you You can't even take stock of your own impressions, far less satisfy all the demands upon you Busy as you are in portraying the sentiments of fictitious characters, you are compelled—you cannot help it—to neglect your own, equally precious though

they are in their way For this reason I shall take good care not to add to the already heavy tax upon your energies, to which I have alluded It is not, and never has been, my desire to share in the charming relationship you offer to other women who, in divers ways, can boast a better claim to it than I The sentiment to which I aspire is on a higher plane I would have you so to hold me in your heart as to keep me, as it were, in reserve, then, if anything untoward should chance to cloud your happiness, any disappointment wound your affections, you will, if you recall me at that hour, see how I shall answer your appeal

It is now a month since I took possession of this place of exile, and I felt that I should like to tell you how perfectly this utter isolation is adapted to my ailing spirit I have sixteen hours a day to dispose of as I will O Honoré, what a treasure ! You would like to have the half of it, wouldn't you ? I'm not trying to tempt you At Saint-Cyr I could sometimes express the hope of getting you to come to us, it was no distance for you It was, perhaps, doing you a good turn to get you away from your work for a day, and from your noisy gaieties But here ! Three hundred miles, Honoré ! Love itself would think twice about it I am comfortably housed Two good bedrooms to put my friends up in, a nice little billiard room, a *boudoir* which would pass muster in Paris itself, and even our backgammon board has come along with us Then, a very big garden where the finest peaches in France grow in profusion, delightful woods, and, quite near at hand, the Charente, which is lovely here, and, last but not least, a good

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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horse, two carriages—one for country and one for town So you see that, on the material side, my needs are well provided for I have dug myself in as though I was sojourning here the rest of my life On the non-material side, we are not quite so well off Ivan, Carraud and myself, in every possible combination and permutation —such is the sum-total of our social resources Happily we get on well together, each and all of us We even regard with some misgiving the forthcoming invasion of an employee and his family, who are coming to take up their quarters here sometime this month I don't fancy we shall ever be very friendly with them, unless, that is, they are very kindly people, or very much out of the ordinary.

You've no idea what merits one needs, to put up with one another when you are living in such close quarters I said nothing to you either, about death which is always lying in wait for you at the Works, and which gives so unique a value to every second you spend there I must analyse that for you one of these days, when I know for certain that you will have time to read what I write Such a thing wouldn't be a waste of time for you, seeing how anxious you always are to track down whatever affects the heart of man or imparts a special tone to life I am going to take up the *Physiologie du Mariage* again I will tell you what I think of it You may find it of interest to have a non-professional opinion on the book, when every sort of worldly criticism has been passed on it I am afraid I was unjust to you in saying what I thought so soon I was guided, as I always am, by my first impressions

People have been talking about my intolerance, since our dismissal from Saint-Cyr. You get short shrift when fortune forsakes you It's no bad thing. Were it not so, the petting and pampering of the fawning crowd would lull you into a coma Of course I may have been intolerant with *you* If so, only one thing could mitigate the poignancy of my regret: the negligibility of my judgment

Do you know, Honoré, that it's almost terrifying to be flung so far away from the centre of everything that is intellectual and enlightened? The idea of remaining stationary freezes me We shall be only too lucky if we do not go retrograde If you ever happened to commit some grave sin, and felt the need of easing your conscience by performing some meritorious work, think of us and tell us something of what is going on in the world, of what is talked about and being done in it, so that, if ever we come back into circulation again we shall not look like bits of old money Good M Périolas came to Berry<sup>1</sup> to say good-bye to us, he rather liked the country there I hope he will come again He has promised to come and see us here at la Poudrerie God grant he may, for here we are bereft of every thing we cared for No one to like, no one even to dislike

Adieu, Honoré, may Heaven ever smile on you!

ZULMA

I forgot to mention the best caravan tea<sup>2</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> To Fraplesle

<sup>2</sup> Balzac must needs have the very choicest tea, tea which he said M de Humboldt procured for him from the crop reserved for the Son of Heaven himself

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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finest of cream I've got my own cows, if you please, and the pastures of la Poudrerie are the best in the province !

*In August, La Peau de Chagrin was published, and a second edition appeared in September in the Romans et Contes Philosophiques. After that, feeling the need of a little rest, Balzac went down for a change of air into Touraine to stay with M de Margonne, an old friend of the family, at Saché. The letter was sent on to him there and it was from there that he dated his reply.*

The concluding sentence of that reply, with its reference to the ever-present danger in which the inhabitants of an ammunition works must necessarily live, inevitably reminds us of the moving tale, on the same theme, written by Alfred de Vigny in 1831, and entitled *La Veillée de Vincennes*.

*But Balzac's life at Saché was innocent of any such attraction. It was calm, almost clostral, as we learn from several descriptions he has given of it. M de Margonne, the lord of the manor, now a man in the fifties, had danced little Honoré on his knee, and it was to him that, in 1842, Balzac dedicated his story, *Une Ténébreuse Affaire*.*

Balzac's stay at Saché, however, was drawing to a close, and at the end of the month he arrived at la Poudrerie. Here he did not find, as at Saint-Cyr, victors of Wagram or survivors of the Beresina, but a worthy Commissaire des Poudres, a M Grand-Besançon, who had travelled extensively in the Far East. And it happened that as they sat round the fire Balzac encouraged M Grand-Besançon to tell him about Java, and the wonders he had seen there.

These were good days for all the inmates of *la Poudrière*, and Madame Carraud did not forget to express her thanks to Balzac in a letter she wrote to him about a fortnight after his return to Paris. But first we must give the letter which, as we have said above, Balzac wrote from Saché. The original is somewhat damaged. Missing words and phrases have been restored and will be found in brackets.

[ 13 bis ]

[ Saché, 21st November 1831 ]

I have not forgotten you. There is a letter for you in Paris. It has been held up at the post-office as being insufficiently addressed. My sister told me you were in Angoulême a little before you really got there. Not knowing exactly where to find you, I asked you to let me know your address so that I might send you my latest book, in order to relieve your solitude, and as a token of a friendship that does not fade. Oh, no, I have, deep down in my heart, a little sanctuary which I cherish like a precious flower, giving thanks to God for making me sensitive to the things that are good and fair. We don't forget our friends like that. Your letter was forwarded to me at Saché in Touraine, and if my friends leave on the 14th December, I can hardly boggle at a trifling matter of fifty leagues or so in order to come and give you the kiss of friendship and the tenderest assurances of my devotion. I was not able to see you in Berry, because *my successes*, as you term them, prevented me. I had to put off my journey in order to see about a second edition of my book. I had to go on this little excursion, which I have often had in mind, and which was to finish up at

Frapesle But unavoidable necessities have again and again disconcerted all my plans If you only knew what an effort it is to write when you have been writing all day long, and what an absorbing place that Paris is! There are plays to go and see in order to review them, invitations you can't refuse, because by getting to know people you win a reputation, and 'reputation,' in my vocabulary, stands for money I've got to eke out my time, to weigh it out as a tradesman weighs out his goods Oh, scores of times I've thought, what a good thing it would be to live on a tiny income with a wife to love me, somewhere right away in the country, like your 'Poudrerie' But I cannot forget that I am in debt, in debt to my mother who spent all her money for the sake of my good name I live under the most relentless of tyrannies, a self-imposed one I work night and day I have fled for refuge to this château, as to a monastery If I come on to Angoulême, it will be to work My brain is everlastingly on the stretch No relaxing for a moment! My life is a continual struggle I've got to fight my way forward inch by inch, to win recognition for my ability, if any And then the things I have to deny myself in order to get on with this penal job, it would be impossible to explain No pleasures, not one! When I think that I get letters now from women all over the country, congratulating me and taking it for granted that my life is a bed of roses, some of them in love with me, but most of them merely inquisitive, or scheming! Please don't be hard on me I have thought of you time and again, and if I have not written to you more often, it is this

cruel life of mine that is to blame The selfishness of a man who has to depend on his ideas for a livelihood is something appalling To be a man apart from the rest, one has to begin by really cutting oneself off from them Is it not martyrdom for a man who loves to unburden his heart, for whom affection is the breath of life, who longs for someone who will shield him from the world, is it not, I say, martyrdom for such an one to be always meditating, comparing, inventing, seeking, voyaging through strange seas of thought, when all he really longs for is to love and be loved It would not be fair of you not to understand that, things being thus, I make up in intensity what my feelings lack in frequency of expression Believe me, what in another would appear indifference, is in my case the greatest self-revelation, the completest expansion of a very genuine sensibility Only I don't show it in so many ways as people who have nothing else to do

Now that I know where to address my letters, I shall send you my book as soon as I get it I am going to a place near Châtellerault about the 13th December to see an old college friend From there to Angoulême is no great distance, but two things have to be taken into account time and money, two things I am often short of I shall have to be back in Paris, at the very latest, by the 25th December Our big stroke of business is due to come off this next year, and I am relying to a large extent on that scheme to get me out of my difficulties In your name and in your remembrance I have promised to write a preface to the novel of the poor officer to whom you took such a fancy at Saint-

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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Cyr Three times I was to have gone to see the Captain, and three times monetary complications prevented me I had work to complete and deliver by a certain specified time and payment depended on my getting it done

I am here busily putting by funds in order to pay off the two remaining debts on my disastrous undertaking<sup>1</sup> I am working on two books at once, besides my newspaper articles

The letter from Laure was sent on to Saché with yours I am going to forward it to her<sup>2</sup> and at the same time to ask her to send by coach to Angoulême, for you to call for, a copy which she has with her and which I was going to give to Charles Nodier I stopped a day with her instead of going to the Arsenal, and the book stopped there too Don't be offended at finding an inscription on the fly-leaf Perhaps, if I am lucky enough to get to Angoulême, I will put in your name instead myself, and add a word or two of remembrance

If you have anything to tell me, my address is Château de Saché par Azai-le-Rideau Indre-et-Loire I shall be here till the 10th December

Adieu, cordial greetings of sincerest friendship to M Carraud, a kiss on the brow for Ivan, and, for you,—let this letter bring you the assurance of a true and lively affection, a sincere friendship and all affectionate sympathies that may contribute to your soul's contentment

Never believe that a life of devotion to literature has the melancholy effect of drying up the heart Mine at any rate has vitality enough to be proof against

<sup>1</sup> The failure of the printing and smelting works in 1828

<sup>2</sup> Cf H de Balzac, *Correspondance* ( Calmann-Levy ) L 137

simulated emotions and, if there is a trace of sensibility in my writings, be assured that the nobler part remains stored up in my heart for those I love

Adieu I have so often proved that solitude is a beneficent thing to one who is endowed with a lofty soul that I do not look upon you as very greatly to be pitied in that beautiful spot, with death beneath your feet There is a touch of the delicious in such a life as that

[ 14 ]

From la Poudrerie, Angoulême 1832

Every morning for the last fortnight, I've been thinking I should be setting out for Limoges It was from there I looked forward to writing to you, dear Honoré<sup>1</sup> But something, either lack of time, or the master's will, has stood in my way, and now, as it is freezing very hard, I cannot say within a week when I shall be going I am therefore deferring the question of the china Rely on my zeal and my care in selection to add to the enjoyment to which you are looking forward, for although my means do not permit me to live a life of elegance and refinement, I have an instinct for them and I sometimes blush for the disappointments which that instinct has to put up with I find that material things have still too much power over me, and that is a failing I do not forgive myself I am continually fighting against it My reason is a wonderful preacher

<sup>1</sup> Limoges was where Mme Nivet, née Lucile Tourangin, Madame Zulma Carraud's sister was living M Philippe Nivet was a porcelain manufacturer and became Balzac's purveyor-in-ordinary

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULEME

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but, when it comes to the point, I can't help being carried away There is something above and beyond all that . Ah, well ! God help me !

I cannot tell you how sorry I was to hear of your indisposition It seemed to me that perhaps I was partly to blame I ought not to have let you work so hard It would have been better for you to have been bored than to get so thoroughly worked up A lot of considerations weighed with me I thought that our humdrum sort of existence could only be offered you in small doses, and merely as an antidote to your prolonged labours Then I didn't dare to go into your room and take you out of yourself and your thoughts for a little while Before you came, that is just what I said to myself I would do , and while you were with us I tried to pluck up courage to do it It was silly, but I could not screw up my resolution, and so you've been ill I find fault with myself, Honoré ! If you are sorry you did not talk of our friendship, we here are in like case But with us there lingers the grateful impression of your regard, which your presence proved more potently than any words May it be thus with you also, and may the sum-total of our words, even the least significant words, have convinced you in your heart how great was the pleasure you gave us, how deep the affection we bear you And speaking of the affections, the Captain whose brow is austere and whose stories are a trifle less so, awaits you *con amore* with the king of Lyons sausages ! Time, whose separate moments

<sup>1</sup> Cf letter from Périolas to Balzac, 12th February, 1832 (*Cahiers Balzaciens*, No L )

## BALZAC AND MADAME CARRAUD

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fleet so swiftly by, seems long when we take it in the mass. It seems to us like six long months since you went away.

Your visit here has marked an epoch. In living time now, we always say 'before' or 'after Honoré' 'Reverie,' which sometimes tries to blossom forth anew, is always an occasion for bringing up your name. There are but three of us to play, but we deal a fourth hand, and the dummy we call 'Balzac.' The vacant chair is yours, and calls to mind unending memories bringing to each of us, according to his nature, pleasures the more deeply felt because they are for the most part too elusive to describe. You were quite right not to have the wreath of amaranth on the vases. Their beauty is in their unity. I have already asked them at Limoges to let me know the extra cost of a wreath on the dinner-service so that I might let you know, and you might be attended to as quickly as possible.

I can quite understand your eagerness to complete your little paradise! After the china and the silver, a feminine presence is all that will be needed to finish off the whole. Be careful how you choose her, dear Honoré. None of your observations or deductions nor even your wildest imaginings can give you an idea of the disaster of an ill-assorted union. In such a case, fame is bitterness, material prosperity intolerable, extraneous affections fraught with sorrow. Don't write that chapter in your works. I have made fruitless applications at the post for the books you mention and at the posting-house for the commissioner's sister.

\* In the Rue Cambon.

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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Every day we make fresh enquiries I will send back the books, or reviews, or proofs or whatever they are, with the vases, that is, if the post-office people can find them The great business venture<sup>1</sup> is being decided upon, now, as I write May it turn out well for you and our fellow countryman Borget<sup>1</sup>

If you will send me a pattern of the paper, we will see what we can do at the famous Ruelle<sup>2</sup> paper works We thought all along that you couldn't get good paper out of middlemen at the lowest price You want a manufacturer, sound financially and with an unimpeachable reputation for integrity May you make a fortune, and may it bring you all the gilded happiness you love<sup>1</sup> I am a stranger to it When, like the banker, you told us about, you have a dozen footmen to every landing of your staircase, and the finest English horses in your phaeton, you still won't quite forget the back-gammon at Saint-Cyr and the *reversi* at la Poudrerie Make haste and get rich We die so soon

And Laure<sup>1</sup> Tell me about Laure Is she pleased at being where she is<sup>2</sup> And your household How does it manage to get along<sup>1</sup> Lord preserve you from daily, never-ending domestic worries<sup>1</sup> Adieu Endless good wishes for your prosperity The Commissioner sends his remembrances Carraud and I are your best friends

*Balzac had need of consolation, for in Paris he had met with nothing but worries and disappointments*

<sup>1</sup> A big bookselling scheme that came to nought

<sup>2</sup> Ruelle sur Touvre, near Angoulême

[ 15 ]

[ Paris, after the 19th January 1832 ]

Oh, how your kind letter warmed me, heart and soul! What a good thing it is to be loved! I will prove to you within a fortnight from now, that I have had those good days at Angoulême in mind. I will send you an account of the journey I took to Java<sup>1</sup> during my stay at la Poudrerie. There is a copy for the good M Grand-Besançon whose name I did not care to quote without knowing whether my fervent eulogiums would outrage his modesty. But the fact is that Upah, The Woman of Java, the Bengali, the Priest of the Monkeys are all recorded in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, or will be, very soon. I hope you will quickly recognise how close I was to all three of you when I wrote those lines.

Here, I've had nothing but worries. My article *Cornélius* in the *Revue de Paris* cut to pieces by the editor<sup>2</sup>, enemies everywhere, more debts than I care about, our big scheme<sup>3</sup> put off again because we want to do eighty-six volumes for eighty francs a year—we have the necessary facilities. All that keeps me at work night and day. For a whole month I've got to

<sup>1</sup> The *Voyage from Paris to Java* did not appear till November, 1832, in the *Revue de Paris*, and not in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. It is dated from Aix les Bains, September, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> *Maitre Cornélius* published December, 1831, in the *Revue de Paris*, then under the editorship of Amadée Pichot, with whom Balzac subsequently severed relations. Pichot had not hesitated, when putting his issue into pages, to mutilate *Maitre Cornélius* in several places.

<sup>3</sup> The book-business referred to above.

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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stick to my writing-table, whereon I fling my life as an alchemist flings his gold into a crucible

The weather is so bad, and my two horses<sup>1</sup> so precious that I dare not go to Saint-Cyr However, at the very first opportunity, I will drop in on the Captain [Périolas], who wrote me a letter charming in its grace, style and friendliness

The great Borget has seen my project come to nought There's no longer any question of travellers

As to the paper, I will send you a sample As to my Commissioner's ulster, it was really and truly dispatched I've got the coach people's receipt And as for *the woman*, there are one or two candidates, but I shall only tie myself up in the proper quarter And if I achieve wealth, trust me for having as few servants as possible I shall live like a Pacha, on my estate, and only spend four months in Paris I shall set the love of friends above all forms of wealth and the thing I shall enjoy the most will be a chat by the fireside with three or four of my own special good women-friends, indulgent and light-hearted

For everything you would fain have, rely on me, put me to the test, and never be afraid of wearing out the affection, the sincere and deep affection, which is devoted to you by

H BALZAC

My affectionate compliments to M Grand-Besançon and my best regards to the good Inspector

<sup>1</sup> Balzac, who went in for a lot of luxury at this time, had a tilbury, a groom and a pair of very expensive horses One of these horses was called *Smogler*, and its portrait by Delacroix was published by us in No 1 of the *Caliers Balzaciens*, as well as the letter from Périolas

*In February, Mme Carraud went to Limoges on a visit to her sister, Mme Nivet, and was careful not to overlook Balzac's commissions.*

[ 16 ]

Limoges, 3rd February 1832

As soon as I got here I went to see about the vases The Commissioner and I went off to the workshop where they are made and bought four, two for him and two for you We chose them with great care and they cost us forty-five francs the pair, packing included They went by express carrier. In the case, you will find also some slippers I have made for you It is a belated offering, and you must excuse all imperfections. The part I could not do myself hasn't been carried out quite as I designed, but I had perforce to be content with what Angoulême could do I crave pardon of your outraged sense of beauty If they don't hurt your feet and you are able to wear them, think of me when you put them on, making yourself comfortable in order to meditate at your ease Make me one of the trio with you and your book, and I shall be content

I went off straightway to see about the china with the amaranth border, but we had left the manufacturers out of the reckoning. In order to get the desired tint it must have three coats, and consequently three bakings which means that plates which, if white, would cost seven francs a dozen, would cost fifteen with the border and the monogram, that is to say, rather more than double With the monogram, but without the border they would be eleven francs a dozen If you would

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

pay the extra, I think, as a matter of taste, you had better only have the monogram, without the border  
I don't know whether you can send me word here  
I shall be here until next Wednesday Tell me what  
you decide, and either my sister or I will see to it Your  
wishes shall be carried out to the letter

Adieu, dear Honoré I am writing with a kind of  
match and I've got no ink This, then, is not an answer  
to your last I will keep that until I get back to la  
Poudrerie I shall be in closer touch with you there

The Commissioner sends you no end of affectionate  
greetings He, however, cannot find his ulster anywhere  
in Angoulême They assure him that they have never  
had it

Your bill would amount to 261 francs If you want the  
border and the monogram it would come to 500 at  
least

Do not forget who loves you

*Then a few days later*

[ 17 ]

Limoges, 7th February 1832

My dear Honoré, I told you your vases and slippers  
were going off Well, they started all right, but with  
them went another case containing M Grand-  
Besançon's vases, and a mortar, which he had picked  
out for his kitchen The dear Commissioner was  
annoyed at the mistake and left it to the manufacturer  
to see to, and he is not too well pleased either, though  
it was all his fault He will recover them from you,  
as well as the mortar, when he collects the forty-five

francs you owe him for your vases If you could dispose of the ones sent you in error, I should be very glad If you possibly can do so, I know you will

I am going back to la Poudrerie and have only time to tell you to count upon me for ever and ever

ZULMA.

*But Balzac, overburdened with work, is a sorry correspondent The crow's quill speeds for none but reviews and publishers There were the Histoire du Chevalier de Beauvoir, Le Grand d'Espagne, Madame Firmiani, Le Message, Le Colonel Chabert, Le Curé de Tours, a decade of Droll Tales . and I know not what besides. He sent no word to Madame Carraud This made her anxious and, on the 3rd May, she wrote this letter*

[ 18 ]

La Poudrerie, 3rd May 1832

Mon Dieu, Honoré dear, wouldn't people say that one or other of us had had an attack of cholera? I cannot forgive myself for not doing anything about you for so long, now when any letter might be the last, and death sunders friend from friend I have plenty of reasons for this silence, but none would excuse me in my own eyes if you turned out to have been ill That is not the case, I hope I had news of you through M Périolas and M Borget up to a fortnight ago Honoré, the Commissioner's family have arrived His wife is tremendously anxious to see you She has brains and is quite up to appreciating you, but she has such an idea of your greatness that she tells me she would never have the courage to utter a word to

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you So, if ever you happen to stray down into these parts, if, tired of living that furious life of yours, you want to rest your over-active brain a little and to live a purely material existence with us, we have resolved not to tell the lady who you are, so that she may retain command of her ideas and that both of you may be able to form a sane estimate of each other

There are, also, at the Commissioner's two very personable young ladies You see la Poudrerie has taken on a social character which it was far from possessing hitherto I don't see so much of the Commissioner as I used to, but his wife makes an excellent substitute

Are you then never going to get clear of this tempestuous mode of life, dear Honoré? Will you always continue to disregard the pleasures of a life that varies only in tone and tint, fulfilled though it is with an affection deep yet calm, strong only in its strength? Has not your imagination initiated you into the delights of a sympathy that can derive its sustenance merely from a look? I, for my part, believe in it, as I believe in my two natures Like the alchemist, after flinging in your gold with lavish hand, you will look in the crucible and find nothing there Only, in the course of your labours, you will have made a few precious discoveries, but will they be worth one quarter of that pure metal you fling away so prodigally? Honoré, you are a remarkable author, but you were called to fulfill a higher rôle than that Popularity is not for you; you should have striven for a guerdon loftier than that If I dared, I could easily say why you squander such a rare intelligence so vainly Come, leave the distractions

of fashionable life to those who have no other resources, or to those for whom great moral defects have made it necessary, as a means of escaping from themselves.

But you, *you*! There, I won't say what I was going to say for fear of overstepping the limits you permit me, but the truth is I should be so proud of your fame, as I understand that word

You are plunging into politics,<sup>1</sup> they tell me Oh do take heed! As your friend, I am alarmed for you. It is not for you to bind yourself to individuals There can be no glory in that save when one has lived in the intimacy of the great ones of the earth In such a case there may be a virtue in personal loyalty But you, whose fame should outlive you, should devote yourself to a principle, to a principle to which you have applied your intellectual powers and which your mode of life will have commended to your sympathies. But leave the championship of persons to the Court folk,<sup>2</sup> and do not bedim your rightful reputation by involving yourself in such entanglements. Do not submerge your brilliant powers, powers which will surely become more brilliant still if you but use them well, by mixing

<sup>1</sup> At this time Balzac was contributing to the journal called *Le Renovateur* and was preparing to enter the lists in favour of the Duchesse de Berry who had recently landed in France

<sup>2</sup> At the same time, and in almost the same words, Mme de Berry, the god-daughter of Louis XVI, was endeavouring in her wisdom to open Balzac's eyes to the drawbacks of his luxurious mode of life and to the dangers of his Carlist connexions 'They [the Royalists] have always been *ungrateful* on principle and they won't make an exception in your sole favour, my friend.' Cf G Hanotaux and G Vicaire, *la Jeunesse de Balzac* 2nd Edition, 1921, pp 249 *et sqq*

yourself up in such passions, in such disputes My dear, dear friend, be true to yourself, even if it means that you have to do without your English horses, and your Gothic chairs I am on thorns to see you as you really ought to be Forgive me for this Your great reputation makes you afraid, and rightly so, that people will not love you for yourself That is one of the penalties of your success Why must you add to that risk additional occasions for insincere friendship, by becoming a social big-wig? Whatever happens do not forget that I at any rate love you in spite of your brilliant gifts, for, so far as I can see, those gifts are a hindrance to the promptings of your heart I know that, if sorrow came, I should be something to you You would base your head on my two hands and your burden would be lightened But I cannot ask or hope for anything more than the friendship you vouchsafe to hosts of others Do you get time to think over what attachments would be the best for you? The torrent whirls you along with a rapidity that robs you even of the consciousness of the fleeting hours, and that makes me fearful for your sake

You say you will only make an advantageous match What do you mean by advantageous? You mean monetarily so, no doubt You have less need than anyone of that inward harmony which is the charm of the marriage tie Your *amour-propre* and your imagination have so much to thrive upon that your wife would be a secondary consideration All the same, Honoré, you should be careful enough in choosing a wife to ensure that she would never be a thorn in your

flesh That would be an ever-open wound When you have come to some definite decision on this subject, let me know at once, so that I may rejoice in your happiness I am too far away and, more than that, I have your interests too much at heart for you to have any fears as to my discretion

I hope your projected visit to Bordeaux will come to pass We will go together It would be delightful The Commissioner's family are charming and would greatly enhance the pleasures of the trip Come when the cruel scourge has abated somewhat We are not anxious here, all of us being sufficiently philosophical not to let any foolish apprehension increase the chances of infection We shall put up with cholera as we put up with the Government, that is to say as a necessary consequence of antecedent conditions Time alone can remedy such great evils Any premature attempt to deal with it would be worse than useless The only thing to do is to keep clear of the stream

Adieu, Honoré, our trees are in leaf and in blossom My boudoir is finished La Poudrerie looks a different place The southern sun has not yet warmed us up again, to the great astonishment of the natives who, within the memory of man, have never known so harsh a spring The Inspector is up to his eyes in novels I am eagerly awaiting the resumption of work in the factory so as to get him away from a mode of life so ill-suited to a gouty subject

Talking of novels, when you have time to write to me, give me the names of a few new books that we can read in common Mme Grand-Besançon and I



assembly and some of the younger members being called on to give their opinion, one of them rose and said 'Sisters, you are defiled by contact with this odious garment, it is the abode of deadly sin!' And that is a fact My mother was a boarder in the convent when the event occurred

*This story appears piping hot in Les Bons Propos des religieuses de Poissy, which Balzac had begun to put together for the second decade of the Cent contes drolatiques<sup>1</sup>*

*Nearly a month went by before Balzac answered, the reason being that on the 20th May, he fell out of his tilbury and nearly killed himself But Madame Carraud's reproaches had gone home, and his rejoinder was a vehement one.*

[ 19 ]

[ Paris ] 1st June [ 1832 ]

I had put off writing to you till I should be sending my *Contes drolatiques* and my *Scènes de la Vie Privée* But behold, I had a fall from my tilbury It was a miracle I was not killed However, here I am in bed, bled, dieted and strictly forbidden to read, write or think! I have seen our good, great and dear Captain [ Périolas ] Fearing lest he should alarm you I am writing this in secret, very vexed with myself that I did not write to you when I was in seclusion, busy finishing off my book The egoism of the writer temporarily overcame the egoism of the friend.

<sup>1</sup> Which appeared under Gosselin's imprint (Paris, 1832) Three Decades only saw the light We, however, discovered some important fragments of the Fourth Decade which we published in *Les Cahiers Balzaciens*, No 4 (Lapina)

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÊME

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And yet your letter moved me to tears I wanted to write to you point by point I am going to do so now at the risk of making my pains worse, for I gave my head a rude knock on the pavement and lay there for twenty minutes before I could collect my ideas

As regards politics, you may rest assured that all my actions and ideas are governed by the sternest and loftiest probity, and, notwithstanding the severe strictures passed by M Caraud on journalists, believe me, I never do anything save under conviction My political creed, my political life, are not to be summed up in a moment If I play any sort of part in the government of the country, I shall come up for judgment later on I am not afraid I set higher store on the esteem of a select few, among whom you occupy a foremost place, as being one of the finest intellects and loftiest spirits that I have ever known, than I do on all the masses put together, for whom, incidentally, I have a profound contempt There are some calls which we must needs obey, and an irresistible something draws me willy-nilly to seek Glory and Power It is not a happy existence I have a taste for women's society and a longing to love and to be loved that has never been completely satisfied Despairing of ever being really loved and understood by the woman of my dreams, never having encountered her but in one form, that of the dispenser of pure affection, I flung myself into the vortex of political passions, and into the stormy and blighting atmosphere of literary ambition In both, maybe, I shall fail of my object But be quite assured of this If I have chosen to drink deep of the

life of my own times, instead of dwelling in happy obscurity, it is precisely because that pure and everyday happiness has never come to me. When a man has to carve out a way for himself, he might as well carve it on the grand and glorious scale, for, if you have to suffer at all, it is better to suffer in a lofty sphere than in a lowly one: and I would rather be poked with a dagger than a pin.

However, everything you say is quite right. If I encountered a woman and a fortune, I should resign myself very readily to domestic felicity. But where am I going to find them? What family would believe that there was any money in literature? I should hate to be beholden for my income to a woman I did not love, and I should hate to win her by false pretences. I am compelled, therefore to remain unattached.

In such a desert, believe me, friendship like yours and the certainty of finding a refuge in a heart as loving as yours, are the sweetest consolations I could have. Your letter was a delight to me. It brought my overwrought spirit the very refreshment that it needed overburdened as it was and irritated rather than touched. What I long for more than anything is still a country life, but with good neighbours and a pleasant home. Wherever that offered, no matter in what part of the country, I should go and take it, and write only just what I wanted to write, so that time should not be heavy on my hands, if heavy it ever could be when there are trees to look upon and to plant. To devote myself to a woman's happiness is my perpetual dream, and I am in despair that I cannot bring it to

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pass, but marriage and lovemaking in a state of penury does not commend itself to my imagination I have handed in to the Messageries Notre-Dame-des-Victoires for dispatch by diligence a parcel addressed 'Madame Carraud, to be called for' Send round and get it As regards the missing parcel, the office are making enquiries They acknowledge having received it, and say they remember it on account of my name Literature has been of some service on this occasion I am not well-off enough for copies to send one to M Grand-Besançon, but you will lend him yours His ulster has given me a terrible twisting

Adieu I almost despair of seeing you this year for, funds permitting, I intend to go to Switzerland and Italy when I have got through some new works that I'm on the point of finishing, and in which the Captain [Périolas] has assisted me with his customary good nature

Do not forget to remember me to everyone, you know all that I ought to say My head and my heart are getting tired My mother is here, counting my every line

All my love, etc , etc  
HONORÉ

*Mme Carraud hastened to reply*

[ 20 ]

De la Poudrerie 16 June 1832

All is well, dear Honoré On going round to the coach-office myself to ask for the books which you said you had dispatched and which I had sent for in vain,

I enquired whether they had not had, some time ago, a parcel addressed to the Commissioner. They said that a very long time ago a parcel came to them with an illegible address and that they had had it on their hands ever since I took the trouble to look it out and at first did not recognise the address, but on examining it more closely I saw that it was from you, and under date January 3rd I found the packet entered up as illegible It had never occurred either to Carraud or the Commissioner, when they visited the office, to mention your name I returned with the Ulster in triumph and very much ashamed of having given you so much trouble, because, as it turned out, the fault really lay with the consignee.

If ever you have anything to send me, address it to la Poudrerie; it will be sent on to us at once What am I to say to you for the compliment you pay me in sending me your two works? I am touched, and proud too I had ordered them from Paris, and I have presented the two that were sent to me to Madame Grand-Besançon, who is one of your ardent admirers Your fourth volume of the *Scènes* is a masterpiece,<sup>1</sup> from whatever angle you look at it You have an insight into the feminine heart that was never vouchsafed to any other man If ever you marry and become the sort of husband all the others are, you will be much to blame Nothing has afforded me more delight than this fourth volume, nothing coincides more perfectly with my ideas There are indeed other miseries of our poor sex that have escaped you; but certainly you have probed

<sup>1</sup> *Même histoire*, which later on became *La Femme de Trente Ans*

more deeply into our existence than ever man did yet How fatigued and harassed you must be if you have it in mind to keep all the promises you have made to the public this year<sup>1</sup> Yes, you need a holiday and a change Italy is a lovely country Its scenery will furnish you with some fine descriptions But for your studies of the human heart you will find but scant material Of *grandes passions* there are few or none now, under that glowing sky Civilization has reduced everything there to one dead level, without bringing with it any concomitant technical advantages

So you had a fall, great Heavens! But you shall tell me all about how that happened another time I hope you are not imperilling a life which is no longer yours to do what you like with, for the mere pleasure of having a finer English horse than this or that other dandy can boast of I forgive you for aspiring to every kind of success, for wishing to shine in every possible way, but that you should run the risk of bringing sorrow on your friends, of keeping them on tenterhooks for the sake of speeding it a few seconds faster than some other man-about-town—that I could not forgive, as long, that is, as I retained the conviction that your books had not monopolised all your warmth of soul and that your intellectual activities had not completely usurped the functions of your heart One of the drawbacks and, at the same time, one of the hidden reefs of an opulent, or even merely stylish mode of life is its utter dependence on material things In the long run

<sup>1</sup> Among others, *La Bataille* and *Les Trois Cardinals*, which never appeared

it ossifies the most generous and warm-blooded disposition Keep clear of it, Honoré, and see to it that a career such as yours does not come to grief upon it I have often heard you belaud M de Chateaubriand's easy-chairs and oak writing-desk

As for politics, believe me, dear Honoré, I have never suspected the sincerity of your convictions Although my own ideas are diametrically opposed to yours, I do not pretend to have a monopoly of sincerity I am unfeignedly sorry that you should have gone so far along the materialistic path, that the well-being of all, the appeal of all for the benefits arising from the development of the intelligence which everyone has at heart, should have been included by you among those utopias which one stows away in some recess of one's mind, like ancient tomes in a library, which are relegated to shelves so lofty as to be almost inaccessible

You like being honoured because you are honoured as a person of distinguished intellectual ability You have forgotten, or perhaps you have never known, the hardships of the man who feels that he has something in him, who has breadth and height of vision, but who is bound hand and foot because of the class prejudice, the disabilities, the disdain, of which, through no fault of his own, he is the victim I, who am self-made, was brought up among what is commonly reputed the dullest and most uneducated section of the people Like all delicate children, I was precocious, particularly in taking notice Although, up to the age of thirteen I had not brought my reflective powers to bear on everything I had stored up in my young head, although

self-instruction, and, afterwards, the necessity of getting some sort of position in life diverted my mind from working in that direction, I fully made up for it when I arrived at maturity

I have a very keen understanding of the moral necessities of the poorer classes, who are so calumniated and so exploited by the passions of the rich, and though I lack something or other that makes for popularity, I should, if I were a man, or in different circumstances, preserve them from a host of ills It is a thing I regret that an indolence born of severe nervous attacks keeps me here where I am, and, more than that, a timidity, or a bashfulness, or something which you would characterise by one of those dynamic words you know how to create, hinders and handicaps me when I am brought into contact with people who have been nurtured differently from me I am afraid of wounding them, I can enter into their susceptibilities, stupid though they be, I like their pride In my eyes it does them credit In them it all takes on an outward form that would inspire disgust if we looked at it superficially I am more prone to that feeling of disgust than anyone, for I always was, and still am, a lover of the ideal in all things You hold by a fixed aristocracy (for there will always be a floating one, the only one at all in the moral world, and the only sound one in the political so far as I can see), to a privileged aristocracy May you never awaken from that illusion! The pain would be more than you could bear you have a noble heart! I have nothing to say about your political vocation I should see more happiness, and at least as much

renown for you in adhering to theoretical teaching But you alone are the judge of what you can do, and if the burden of political power, wielded with the strictest probity, without fear or favour, doesn't daunt you, I hope you will get your share It is the rock on which many a gifted nature, many a solid reputation has split May Heaven bless your undertakings and keep your feet from stumbling The charm of a sheltered life has receded from your gaze you have frightened it away There is a brightness in your look which it is not given to everyone to bear with a steady gaze People shun it, either because they cannot comprehend it, or because there are some dark recesses which they do not wish to expose to such a scrutiny Then, the idea of your superiority is a thing that militates against intimacy A woman can only truly love a man who is above her, but if she feels herself too far below him, it is bad for her There must be a certain equality in love.

Do you then despair of ever finding a woman who will associate herself with you from inclination, and not from self-interest? Will there then never be a family worthy of you? There are such a number of people with moderate means, or with none at all, who would make good matches!

Did I tell you I had begun to read, conscientiously and in little doses, the *Physiologie du Mariage*? I shall have further amends to make to you, and I shall gladly do so, I do not like to feel you in the wrong

Adieu, Honoré, the Commissioner who came in a few moments ago, while I was writing, sends his cordial

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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remembrances His wife would regard it as a calamity if she were to die without seeing you You said something about going a journey What has become of that plan and what did you manage to do with the few notions you got? One of our common friends, Auguste Borget, is here He is going to the Pyrenees, lucky mortal! And our plan? Gone with all the rest of the dreams that charm you for a fleeting moment and disappear! Do you know that if I were in your place I'd rather go to the Basque country than to Italy You don't want to study antiquities In the Basque country, new and unfamiliar customs, traditions strange and full of charm would be grist for your mill One of my brothers was there for a year and his recollections of the place have never faded I have no personal motive in saying this, Honoré

Dear as it is to see you, it is dearer still to hear your lovely pages praised

ZULMA

*Borget adds a postscript*

May you soon be well again and up to touring Switzerland and Italy Such is the wish the wish of a friend who loves and admires you

AUG BORGET

*It was not in Italy nor yet in Touraine that Balzac decided he would find the peace necessary to bring him back to health and to his work again So he returned to Saché, to M de Margonne's, before going on to join the Marquise de Castries at Aix-les-Bains in Savoy*



was venting my spleen a little at the prospect of a probable disappearance of the little bit of money I had got together with the aid of my pen There's no doubt about it, we shall have to wait for things to settle down before starting on our enterprise The thing is, what's one to do till then?

If you knew how I am working I am a regular pen-and-ink galley-slave, a positive idea-monger At this very moment I'm finishing off volume four of the *Contes Philosophiques* I've only got a few more pages to do You'll have it in a fortnight or so, and, in this connexion, I should like to know whether you have the preceding three They are reprinting *Les Chouans*, and that, of course, means corrections To put it briefly, I am laying the foundations for a big work entitled *La Bataille*<sup>1</sup> Then I have to finish off a book in two octavo volumes, *Conversations entre onze heures et minuit* I shall hardly have enough time to go on my travels It gave me a lot of pleasure to hear you liked the fourth volume of the *Séances [de la Vie privée]* I set a lot of store by it That particular volume couldn't be written to-day It needs a youth's heart and a youth's quickness of perception

But sixty leagues from you—half the journey! Shall I come? Or shan't I? I should very much like to know whether Madame Nivet has cashed her draft She gave me the date, and I paid in the money, but I didn't answer her because I want to economise on my writing as much as possible I'm a miser over it Possibly she took the silence of consent for the silence

<sup>1</sup> Which he never succeeded in bringing to completion

of bankruptcy I left Paris still ninety-eight francs to the good, and intending to leave them so But suppose my mother used them up, and the draft were presented ! The thing worries me

I have given the Messageries people a tremendous dressing down<sup>1</sup> But God be praised, my *bona fides* is established

Adieu, don't forget to tell the Commissioner that I appreciate his message, that the *Voyage à Java* is done, that he will read it in *Conversations entre onze heures et minuit* and that I look back with pleasure on those hours when I saw him and heard him talk.

My best regards to M Caraud As for you, there's no need for fine words, and you understand all the tender and delicate things the heart of a friend would proffer you You are one of those gifted spirits to whom I am proud to be united by some of the bonds of our own choosing, and whenever I think of you, sweet memories awaken in my mind Ah, if *someone* had been willing to go to the Pyrenees I should have seen you, but now I've got to go clambering up to Aix in Savoy, after someone who, perhaps, is fooling me, one of those aristocratic women<sup>1</sup> whom you doubtless look upon with horror, one of those women beautiful as an angel, whom we credit with an angel's soul the real duchess, very disdainful, very loving, dainty, witty, full of

<sup>1</sup> The Marquise ( afterwards Duchesse ) de Castries, of whom Balzac has painted so bitter a portrait in *La Duchesse de Langeais* It is interesting to compare this sombre portrait with the unpublished correspondence which we published in No 6 of the *Cahiers Balzaciens*

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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coquetry, like nothing I have ever seen ! One of those phenomena who eclipse themselves, who says she loves me and wants to keep me immured in a palace in Venice (for I tell you everything) and would have me write for no one but her, one of those women whom you positively must go down on your knees to worship when they will it so, and whom it is such bliss to overcome, the woman of one's dreams ! jealous of everyone and everything Ah, better far it were to be at Angoulême at la Poudrerie, living a godly, righteous and sober life, hearing the mills at work and getting ankle deep in truffles, learning from you how to send a billiard ball into a pocket, laughing and talking—how much better than squandering one's time, one's life to no good end !

Adieu, Take it that in me there is a soul, and a soul that loves to think of you

I am here for a fortnight If I can, if you are at la Poudrerie, if      if      Well, anyhow, I'll try !

At Saché, near Azai-le-Rideau

*Mme Carraud immediately replies*

[ 22 ] [ From la Poudrerie, Angoulême, 8th July 1832 ]

At Azai-le-Rideau, sixty leagues from us, Honoré ! Why haven't I the right to command, why haven't I been able to render you, or, better still, be rendered by you, the sort of service which entitles one to say 'Do this, it is my will and pleasure' Then I should say 'Honoré, your room is ready, your tea is on the table I have put the cream ready and brought in the Brie myself' An affectionate heart offers you rest and

quiet, and rest and quiet are so needful in the artificial life to which you are condemned With me, with all of us here, you could enjoy a brief taste of the sort of life you like best For it is not because you are famous that we love you That is no sort of link between us We delight in it as if we had a share in it, often enough we fear it

And so you're in love ! In love with one of those creations of yours that Chance, one auspicious day, placed within your reach And you're still asking yourself whether she's got a soul ! Honorié, my dear Honoré, ought you not to have more faith ? How could my friendship compensate you for such a lack as that ? This woman, this sylph-like creature, so greedy of your fame that she wants to swallow it all up for herself, must she not have a soul to compensate you for everything ? When you have forgone everything, renounced everything, even your friends, will you not need a haven whereto you may betake yourself for peace and consolation ? And would you love her, would you go whither she calls, if she was a perfect paragon of beauty, and yet devoid of soul ? You who know so much about women, could you still be misled by your delirious imagination ? Why do you suppose that this eminently aristocratic woman would inspire me with horror ? If there be any women of that class who have escaped the spiritual barrenness which is the necessary consequence of their upbringing and their mode of life, if there are any who have seen how degrading it is for one of the privileged class to be content with being a mere plaything indispensable, indeed, to men who have never brought

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their minds to bear on what is noble, who have never employed their reflective powers on any serious subject, then I love them, as I do those who, to the advantages of a superior education and refined habits, unite an intuitive understanding of the nature of true happiness. The one you are following, of whom you dream, I love her if she can embellish a single hour of your days and if, above all, she does not plunge your heart into the bitter waters of disappointment. If ever that should happen, Honoré, you know where to look for the consolation of a true sympathy, do you not? You will know where to lay down the burden which would be too heavy a load even for your manly shoulders.

I think it remarkable that you should get letters from women you don't know, and who only know you by repute<sup>1</sup>. I too was prompted to do the same thing, the man being, in one case, a writer and in the other, an artist, but shame prevented me. It seemed a thing so profoundly at variance with a woman's character. The author I never saw. The artist I am indebted to you for knowing by sight.

So you still have your worries. Heavens! Shall I never see you carrying on at your ease in that imaginary

<sup>1</sup> It was an unsigned letter *à propos* of the *Physiologie du Mariage* in 1831, that marked the beginning of the relations between Balzac and Madame de Castries. Sometime later, in 1832, the same thing occurred with Madame Hanska. We have discovered a number of letters addressed to Balzac from unknown female admirers and we have published them in the *Cahiers Balzaciens* Nos. 3 and 5. Women played so large a part in establishing Balzac's fame and we have traced the stages of this feminine apotheosis in *Bettina, or the cult of Balzac* (Balzaciana No. 2, Lapina).

world that you portray so well? I would accompany you thither with a willing heart, if only to gain a little respite from the importunities of this real one

Here you can work well, and at night go for a walk along the banks of the Charente and gaze at the moonlight sparkling on the waterfall. Then, if that would help you to expedite your labours, I would sit near you with my tapestry frame, quite silent, yet always ready to answer if you asked a question. In that way I should lose the fear you inspire me with, despite myself, and to which I do not confess without a blush, for it is almost like finding fault with you. I don't think it was my sister who drew on you. It must, I think, have been Latrille the porcelain manufacturer. Anyhow I will write so that you may have nothing further to worry about on that score. If you come here I hope you won't write to Madame de Balzac for funds to return to Paris, if you should happen to need them.

The Commissioner is beaming with joy at your remembering him. He, too, wants you to come. Should such a favour be in store for us, we have made up our minds to introduce you to his wife under the name of one or other of our acquaintance at Saint-Cyr. You must connive at our little plot. It is the only way to put her at her ease with you, even if we only keep it up for a couple of hours.

Adieu, Honoré, I should like to take your hand, and embrace you. I dare not think of it. Remembrances from Carraud, he too wants to see you badly. ZULMA

*And Balzac at once wrote back as follows*

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[ 23 ]

Saché 10 July 1832

Yes, I shall come and see you. I will write and let you know the exact date of my arrival, so that if the Commissioner's horses and yours are still together, you may be able to do me the kindness to meet me, for I am still like a child that can't manage without its nurse, and I should be as much at sea about getting to Angoulême as I should be about getting to China.

But you will have a very dismal guest and, though my heart is full of tender friendship and nice things for you, I am condemned to work so hard that my behaviour looks like rudeness.

I am bothered by this country-house existence. There are visitors here and you've got to dress at a stated time, and country people think it strange that one should neglect one's dinner merely for the sake of following up a train of thought. They have already nearly finished me with that bell of theirs! I intended getting back to Paris. But I will come and burden you with my friendship and behave like one of those children who abuse the kindness with which they are treated.

Good-bye, then, for the present. The thought of seeing you banishes a deal of sadness, for it is so sweet, so good, to be with those you love. I am mightily afraid of being dragged back here in connexion with a certain matter that I will tell you about when we meet<sup>1</sup>.

My heartfelt love, and don't forget to remember

<sup>1</sup> A proposed match, which came to nothing, with a young widow, the Baronne Caroline Deurbroucq.

me to M Caraud and the Commissioner I take it  
that Master Ivan is quite well, and that I shall find him  
grown

Adieu

HONORÉ

Inasmuch as I am coming to see you, you perceive  
that the great lady is at fault

*So Balzac arrived at Angoulême on the 17th July, having  
judged it, at midday, in the broiling heat, from Saché  
to Tours in order to get the diligence*

*During his one month's stay at la Poudrière, the novelist  
did not relax his exertions 'I get up at six (in the evening),'  
he wrote, 'and correct Les Chouans Then I work at La  
Bataille from eight o'clock till four in the morning, and  
during the day I correct what I did the night before' Louis  
Lambert, which he had begun at Saché six weeks earlier,  
he finished off in ten days In a single night he wrote La  
Grenadière, which he improvised between a couple of  
games of billiards No small matter! 'I remember,' said  
Balzac writing a long time afterwards to Madame Carraud,  
'I remember what you said to me one day at Angoulême,  
when, tired out after writing Louis Lambert, feeling really  
ill, and fearing, as you know how, I was going off my head,  
I was speaking about the neglect into which these poor  
afflicted people are allowed to fall "If," you said, "you go  
mad, I will take care of you" Never have I forgotten those  
words, or the expression on your face as you uttered them  
They remain with me as vividly as when I first heard them  
in July, 1832' And yet, on the 22nd August, 1832, Balzac  
left the Carrauds for Aix-les-Bains in Savoy, there to join*

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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*Claire Clémence Henriette Claudine de Maille, Marquise de Castries (then about thirty-six years of age), who was waiting for him to come*

*But it was in sorry case that our traveller arrived at his destination, as we shall see from the account he sent his friend*

[ 24 ]

[ Aix, early in September 1832 ]

I have arrived at Aix, but not without mishap  
At Thiers I nearly met my death I was climbing up  
on to the outside of the coach and, just as I let go the  
straps by which you hoist yourself up, the horses started  
off, and I fell, but, in my fall, just managed to catch  
hold of one of the straps and there hung suspended in  
mid air The blow which I gave myself against the  
side of the vehicle with the fourteen stone you wot of,  
was a violent one, and one of the iron steps laid open  
my shin My breeches, one of my books and my blouse  
were torn and cut I did not get my wounds attended  
to till I reached Lyons, I've not got over it even yet  
But the scab has at last formed after four fomentations  
I am on my legs again and, thanks to the care the  
drivers took of me—they made me a bed on the top  
of their coaches—I shall be all right in a couple of days  
I have already been able to drive out to the Lac du  
Bourget

There I go, prattling on about myself! I had a  
magnificent journey and was delighted with it The  
valleys of Limousin are still uppermost in my mind,  
Auvergne notwithstanding But the plain of Limagne  
facing the Royal valley is sublime The weather was

good I saw the landscape under the most favourable conditions Then, by the greatest of good luck, I had a gay and witty companion all the way to Limoges, a really good soul That was something of a godsend Dejean is his name, and he comes from Limoges

Hither I have come for a lot and a little A lot, because I see a most kindly and gracious lady , a little, because I shall never get her to love me

Why did you send me to Aix?

When I was at Lyons, I made some further corrections to *Lambert* I've licked my cub into shape, like a bear I abridged it still more and added something that will be new to you, that is, Lambert's last thoughts On the whole I'm satisfied, it's good It is a work profound in its melancholy and its knowledge It's a fact, I quite deserve to have a mistress and every day I get more and more vexed at not having one, because love is my life, my very being

You see I'm writing you in spite of what you said  
But perhaps I shall see you again before long

*La Bataille* is begun

M Bergès ought to have had his book If the Angoulême people would like me for their deputy, I should like them for my constituents

Madame Zulma? . The mail for France only leaves Aix twice a week I have an ordinary little room<sup>1</sup> with a view of the whole valley I get up relentlessly at half-past five in the morning and work at my window

<sup>1</sup> At two francs a day, hired in the maison Roissard through the Marquise de Castries, commanding a view of the whole valley, including the Dent du Chat and the Lac du Bourget

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

till half-past five in the evening<sup>1</sup> My lunch is sent in from the club Madame de C[ astries ] gets some good coffee made for me At six o'clock we dine together, and I spend the evening with her She is a woman of the most refined type Another Madame de Beauséant,<sup>2</sup> only better But are not all these pretty manners acquired at the expense of the soul?

If Mademoiselle Marinettissima<sup>3</sup> is still with you, give her a kiss on the neck from me, her champion You will not omit to remember me to His High-and-Mightiness, the Lord Grand-Besançon and to Madame I have this in common with Madame Raison, I've got a pain in my shin bone I'm flattered Remember me to that excellent Latinist, M Raison I will make no mention of the worthy Major At the end of all my letters, there's always a hearty grip of the hand for him And as for you, I will leave you to divine all that I do not put in writing, but you will allow me to kiss that pretty hand of yours, so soft, so gentle and so inspiring

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Do you feel like confounding me? Madame Nivet, whom I just had time to see, spoke to me about the vases

<sup>1</sup> Except for some romantic excursions ( by carriage owing to the wounded leg ) to Lake le Bourget, the Grande Chartreuse or to Vareppe where they visited 'The Country Doctor'

<sup>2</sup> Claire de Bourgogne, Vicomtesse de Beauséant, whom Balzac had just depicted in *La Femme Abandonnée*, dated Angoulême, September, 1832, and published Sunday, 16th idem, in the *Revue de Paris*

<sup>3</sup> Ward and niece of Grand-Besançon

I'll have my revenge ! I saw Madame Nivet The Angoulême coach gets to Limoges at six in the morning and the coach for Lyons leaves at ten Your nephew showed me over the town, and I had breakfast with your sister and her husband. Your sister is very poorly There's something radically wrong, judging by her colour. It was easy to see that her health was in a precarious state.

I was stupidly forgetting to tell you about this pleasant interlude in my journey, doubly interesting to you

Good-bye again. While I am away, you will receive my *Lambert*. If I had been in Paris I would have sent a copy to your neighbours. But it's difficult Moreover, I should have to give them all four volumes and my bookseller told me at Lyons they would soon be sold out When the next edition comes out I shall be better able to requite their kindness.

You know everything there is here for you but no, you don't quite know !

*The affectionate Madame Carraud, his unwearying confidante, wrote back from la Poudrerie*

[ 25 ]                    10th September 1832 at la Poudrerie

Little did I think, mon Dieu, that you were ill ! I was consoling myself for your silence by imagining you were enjoying yourself I took it that that brilliant day for which you had so long been yearning, had dawned at last, and I put down your forgetfulness to the intoxication to which I assumed you were a prey Poor Honoré, you are ill and it is not I who am there

to tend you ! The one privilege I hankered after, the fates have denied me So far as you are concerned, the end of your troubles is in sight But I've had them all compressed into one single hour It was too much for such a brief space of time You impress upon me that you are working twelve hours a day That is all very well, but when one of your idle fits comes over you,—which your friends will never complain of, seeing that they get all the benefit,—when, I say, this occurs, betake yourself to Nature, the Nature round about you, since you have no one at hand to share your thoughts and feelings You will get something more lasting from it than from a game of billiards, or a conversation with my very humdrum neighbours Dear Honoré, the sight of those lovely mountains, those lakes and all that Alpine scenery, beneath so exquisite a sky, will almost free your spirit, vast though it is, from the multitudinous prejudices which beset it. Yes, my lord, it is I, my tiny, insignificant self, that dares thus to address the idol of the day The reason is, his adorers bite him when they want to, while I—well, I *love* him, which is far more difficult than adoring him What, in point of fact, is easier than exaggeration ? But truth, truth, Honoré, is as rare in life as it is in the creations of the mind, and you know how difficult it is to achieve it there Yes, my good Sir, you have prejudices which I should like to take on my own shoulders, in order to free you from them, for what matters an idea of doubtful validity in one of my obscure position ? But you, who are up on a pedestal, you, whom people would fain dissect to see whether they could find some

structural defect in you, offer so much for them to get their teeth into ! It's enough to drive one crazy for life

But these distorted ideas ( politeness forbids me to call them false ) you forcibly cram into yourself, as people cram poultry for the table You have a mind that is essentially well-balanced, your education and temperament raise you above all kinds of factitious, artificial necessities, and yet, because you must have the encomiums of a particular class ( the only people you regard as important—the sort of people who must smell of *miel d'Angleterre*, or *essence du Portugal*) people whose tone, I admit, is admirable, but who, revolving in a very contracted and materialistic social orbit, could never take a view of things as a whole,—the need, I say, of gaining the approval of these people, makes you neglect and despise every other consideration I have heard you say that you only wrote for twenty intelligent readers But you print more than twenty copies of your books Be logical, first and foremost, if you please How do you suppose that he who regards a man as wanting in brains because his clothes are not of the latest cut, who looks on a working-man as a mere machine, and on the horny-handed navvy merely as a potential gaol-bird—how do you suppose that such an one would be broad-minded enough to realise that *angels are white*,<sup>1</sup> how could one who sees in everything that moves outside his own particular sphere, nought but creatures of a faulty nature, debarred from the ineffable pleasures of the mind, who does not realise that one who models a piece of furniture, designs

<sup>1</sup> Said by *Louis Lambert* in his madness

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULEME

the cut of a dress, or the lines of a hat, has the same feeling for elegance as the millionaire who buys them? Would such an one, I say, understand what it means to sail away on a word in order to explore the vast ocean of byegone ages? Fancy the man who portrayed *Lambert* not being able to do without English horses! Honoré, it pains me to think that you have not got a soul above such things. Why, when you put up your brains to the highest bidder and write about some ignoble subject or other, I suffer indescribable torture, I hide my head in shame. That you should send an article to the *Revue de Paris*!<sup>1</sup> Oh, how sorry I was not to have a hundred louis by me, that I might save you from such a disgrace. I would have sold carriages, horses, even the Persian hangings, rather than that you should have delivered yourself into the hands of a rogue who has insulted you, rather than that you should have given him the right to say—as he surely will—that everyone has his price!<sup>1</sup>

His price, yes! And that's because with those rich people of yours, it is beneath one's dignity to walk

How I love Raphael in his garret!<sup>2</sup> How great he is! And how right it is of Pauline to adore him! For, don't make any mistake about it, she only loves him afterwards because of what she remembers of him then. She loves him when he is rich because of what she had done for him when he was poor. How

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the agreement dated 1st September, whereby Balzac undertook to write exclusively for the *Revue de Paris* for a remuneration of 500 francs a month.

<sup>2</sup> Raphaël de Valentin and Pauline Gaudin in the *Peau de Chagrin*

diminished he is when he has got his millions ! Have you measured the shagreen skin since you've had your rooms done up, since that very up-to-date barouche of yours has been bowling you home every night at 2 a m from the rue du Bac ?<sup>1</sup>

Why did I send you to Aix, Honoré ? Because it was the only place where you could get what you wanted A virile affection (if I may so express it) born of a strong soul, to whom nothing on earth is indifferent, who has a feeling for all, who understands all suffering, and repels the sympathy of none, who, living the life of a voluptuary in an atmosphere heavy with perfumes, yet endures the smell of garlic without repugnance—such a thing does not suit you at all What you want is a woman of soft contours, and alluring ways, the last word in elegance , and you hope to find a broad and rich-hued soul in a satin envelope like that ! That, you'll never do.

For all this charm, all these externals, if they are to be perfected and thereafter preserved, require that the understanding should play its undivided part But, in such a life, what is there left for the things of the mind ? When the world of fashion has taken what it craves, how much, seeing that the day has but twenty-four hours, how much will be left over for that high thinking by which heart and mind are eternally renewed ? What will remain when those dreams of luxury have absorbed their share ? If we will a thing, we must will the consequences that ensue from it ; I understand how it is that learned men are so venal,

<sup>1</sup> That is the house of the Marquise de Clémire

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so base, so cringing The capacity of the human understanding is everywhere the same When one dominant idea absorbs it, we must ask of it nought besides That is why I used to be so much struck with the kindness and practical philanthropy of M Biot<sup>1</sup> I let you go to Aix because we have not one idea in common, because I despise the things which you extol, because I am of the people, refined, indeed, by training and education, but still of the people, ever compassionate towards the suffering and the oppressed, because I hate all powers and dominions for the reason that I have never yet discovered justice in any of them, because I never did, and never shall allow that a man who has fame in his grasp, should voluntarily sacrifice it for money, because, though I admit that a man may have a political colour, and a very definite one, I do not consider it right that he should intrigue against, and heap obloquy upon, the party opposed to him, whether it be on the winning or the losing side Double-dealing seems to me a despicable thing, whatever advantage it may bring I have not lived with the disciples of the Jesuits, and, in my eyes, the end does not justify the means You are at Aix because you are to be bought by a party,<sup>2</sup> a woman being the price of the transaction, and I, plain of feature, undersized and lame, will never win over a man for whom such seductive traps are laid The woman of ideas is not negotiable as the purchase price of the political

<sup>1</sup> The famous mathematician and a friend of Major Carraud's

<sup>2</sup> The Royalist Party, of which M de Fitz-James, the Marquise de Castries' uncle, was one of the foremost adherents

conscience of the most ordinary man I can pity a friend for being led away by sophistries backed by aristocratic favours But to pity my *lover*! My lover would be a god, and a god does not call for compassion You are at Aix because you needed a *woman*, and I am not one, because the deprivation of all intimate relationship made you long for it the more, and because I am too proud to be chosen under the compulsion of such a necessity You reckoned to act upon me by holding out the hope of some unknown paradise It never occurred to you that I was too proud to be initiated into it! You do not know the delights of voluntary chastity It is perhaps to the fact that this singular position invests me with something unusual and out of the common that I am indebted for the attention you have bestowed on me in my womanly capacity You do not know that I only have in mind a spiritual alliance, that I would accept the other as an unavoidable corollary, merely in order that no preoccupation should intervene to mar that complete union which is the most perfect type of earthly happiness I am voluptuous, you say, and I fight against voluptuousness. Do you realise all that that implies? Moreover, in your theory of ideas, with which I partly agree, does not imagination accomplish a thing, before it comes to pass in actual life? And do you not think me sufficiently strong for that fine inward life, in which we hold our friends and our loves to be so happy? You are at Aix because your soul has gone away, because you have rejected real glory for the counterfeit, because my being would never be drawn

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by a pressure of the hand to mingle with that of a man who rejoices when he outpaces all the other drivers in the Bois, and arrives first at the Place Louis XV That is giving priority to the vainest sort of mental satisfaction I am saying a lot of hard things to you, dear Honoré, but I am saying them without misgiving, because I feel myself so rich in good and frank affection that I can make amends for whatever is over harshly spoken here, because, when your duchesses fail you, I shall always be at hand to offer you the consolations of a truly sympathetic mind But what folly to have turned your thoughts to me I dared not say all that to your face I simply could not My voice would have betrayed me, would have revealed to you what my real thoughts were, so it was no good Yes, Lambert is well worth a mistress, if mistresses are won by merit But, my dear, there is a wonderful intuition that every woman has, see that it is for you As I believe you are sufficiently wise not to hope to find the things you have forgone, I prophesy that you will be happy at Aix That could not well be, the first day, but you dine and live under one roof together Vanity and pleasure will form a bond between you, and you will have what you ask for Moreover, believe me, your party is much too eager to win you over to their cause to permit you to decline on to a lowlier object of affection

Oh, Honoré, why did you not keep yourself aloof from all this political jobbery, such a pitiable thing, when you come to look at it? That you should forsake the world of ideas, that you should busy yourself with little pettifogging political nostrums, as though

it were in the power of man to change the course of events<sup>1</sup> And you have read history, and Thierry, who, notwithstanding his sympathy with the vanquished, respects this important truth, namely that what succeeds is right, where it can hold its ground Well, all those questions, so far as you are concerned, find their solution in a life of pleasure and social distinction

The *Contes Drolatiques* are worth more than a government appointment, all the same Stick at *La Bataille* Don't write to me, because that takes you off your work As for myself, I've been rather unwell, enough so to give one a cholera scare, but it has passed off Had it not been for that, you would have had a letter from me before you wrote yours M Bergès<sup>2</sup> has got his book I have not seen him since Shall we, I wonder, be seeing each other again? When I mentioned this possibility in the presence of the neighbours, their countenances all brightened up, each looked animated in his own particular way The old gentleman is always thinking, and almost always talking, about you, and laments your departure in touching fashion He bores me a little these days Madame Raison<sup>2</sup> also talks about you The rest are so far from having any sincerity about them that I will refrain from telling you of all the gushing things they have poured forth to me about you Poor dear Marinette, Marinette in the

<sup>1</sup> A leading educationist at Angoulême, M Bergès had promised to help in Balzac's election campaign The book referred to is probably *Le Renovateur*, a royalist publication to which Balzac contributed, or else *l'Enquête sur la politique des deux ministères*, published in April, 1831, by M de Balzac

<sup>2</sup> Mme Grand-Besançon's mother

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superlative, is ill as the result of bad treatment in a home She has changed in the most alarming fashion The other      the other      but stay ! I dare not speak of it This living at close quarters is burdensome to me We are going to dine at seven, when Auguste<sup>1</sup> gets back, all of us together, so as to shorten the inevitable evening

Ah, well, Honoré, I am glad the post only leaves three times a week, I really am Marinette thanks you for your remembrance, she is too good a girl to get flustered about it I whispered it to her, very quietly, for fear of its being misinterpreted

The Major is well, and reads the stupidest books with an ardour that is really engaging And now, Sir, when the fairest hands in France are at your disposal, how can you have any thoughts for those vellum-like hands, as you described them, that, here at la Poudrerie, are inditing these lines to you?

My sister is careless and indiscreet The vases should have been with you long ago I wanted you, on your arrival, just for an instant, one whole instant, to fancy yourself in the billiard-room and to think you saw my face amid the china It did not come off My sister, alas, is very poorly For a long time now we have been anxious about her, though her case has nothing out of the ordinary about it It was very good of you to go and see her, poor soul She was an extremely good-looking woman, but that has done her no harm She will be charming in her old age Adieu, I love you much, and I embrace you a little Carraud is greatly

<sup>1</sup> Borget

attached to you Our artist is going to see the Mediterranean He sticks at his work Like you, he nearly lost a leg.

*Madame Carraud's impeachment had a great effect on Balzac, but he was not hurt He realised only too well that all the hard things she had said had been inspired by the profound affection she entertained for him, and by the desire to find nothing mean or calculating in the object of her love and admiration He wrote off at once, on the 23rd September*

[ 26 ]

AIX, 23rd September, 1832

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your letter, which, despite the hard things it contained, was so full of tenderness and affection It is *with pleasure* that I lay aside my work to write to you On the 10th October, I shall be setting out for Italy, which I find irresistible Be easy in your mind, *La Bataille* will appear right enough, and something better than *La Bataille*, a book after your own heart, *Le Médecin de Campagne*. Don't worry yourself about the *Revue de Paris* The editor and the paper have, humanly speaking, done all I could ask of them They will make up for everything They are paying me a fixed sum monthly of five hundred francs for one article a month

What I like about you is that you tell me exactly what you think All the same, I cannot accept what you say about my character as a politician, and about the 'man in power' My opinions have taken shape, my convictions have been come to at a time of life when a man may rightly form some judgment of his country,

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its laws and customs I have not gone into things blindly, I have not been actuated by personal considerations I can tell you that, in all good faith I speak to you from heart to heart and I would never willingly mislead you Well then, my political character and opinions must, and always will, remain unalterable My theory of government, my ideas are just and sane At least I think so They involve many more of your own than you might think The only thing is, I adopt what I think is a surer way to bring about their fulfilment The view you take of interests, things, people, and moral codes is only a partial one I think I take a comprehensive view of things I think I can so combine the various elements as to ensure the well-being of the whole body-politic I will never be bought by anyone I will always be, up to my lights, noble and generous The abolition of all classes of nobility, outside the House of Peers, the severance of the Church from Rome, natural frontiers for France, strict equality among the middle classes, recognition of real merit where it exists, economy in public expenditure, increase of revenue from a revised system of taxation, education for all, such are the chief planks in my political platform, and you will find that I shall loyally adhere to them There will be cohesion between my words and my actions

As to means, I am the judge of them I submit to every calumny, I am ready for everything, because one day voices will be raised in my favour I want the government to be strong You may not approve, you may not understand, all my ideas to begin with,

all my methods: but you will always respect me and care for me always, because I am not a man to be corrupted either by money, or by a woman, or by a plaything, or by the government, because I want it to be one and indivisible. You may rely on that. I always look on my life as a whole and rate my self-respect above all else in the world.

That being so, don't go out of your way to cavil at my opinions any more. The broad scheme of things is mapped out. As to the details of my life, or improvements in giving effect to this or that, your attention will be always paramount, its counsels listened to not only with attention, but delight. I speak to you open-heartedly, because I know that you will respect the secrets of my political creed. It is of a kind that would make my party hate me, if they knew about it. But it is impossible to secure its triumph without the concurrence and the co-operation of the leaders. I am not practising any deceit on my party. I think its existence depends entirely on the whole-hearted recognition of what the ideas of the times demand.

I must tell you that, if M. Bergès has not deceived himself in the friendly feelings he has evinced for me in advance, I should, if the circumstances called for it, present myself as a candidate for Argentière. Indeed I would come back to La Pouëze from Italy, no matter where I was, if you told me that I had any chance of success. I shall have the backing of both the party papers, which have at length come to an agreement to put up royalist candidates at the coming elections. I will see to it that a sufficient quantity of political

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literature for the needs of the district is sent either to you or to M Bergès I recommend you to push the circulation of my little 18mo, *Le Médecin de Campagne*. It will gain me some friends. It is a kindly sort of work, designed with an eye to the Prix Monthyon<sup>1</sup>.

Forgive me, dear, for joking about the money side of my writings. It shocked you, and it was very childish on my part, like a good many other things I say and do. Do you imagine money can repay me for my labour, for my health? No! No! I value above everything the pleasure of giving an added thrill to such a heart as yours, and, if my imagination as an artist sometimes carries me away, be quite sure about my coming back, and with love, to the beautiful and the true.

You were right, and you were wrong, to send me here wrong, because I was very happy with you, right, because the trip has enlarged my ideas. I tell myself that if I am to live my life I ought not to be tied up to any woman's apron-strings, that I have got to pursue my destiny with a free and open mind and fix my gaze higher than a woman's girdle. Whatever you may say, I shall always be loyal to those dear hands at La Poudrerie, though I did compare their satin-softness to vellum. If M Caraud cares for me at all, he will keep all his ideas concerning ameliorative measures for me and I will make them public by incorporating them in my own programme. If you still hold me in your heart, you will not stint me in advice, or in scoldings, or in reproaches. Lay on and spare not.

<sup>1</sup> On Balzac and the Prix Montyon, cf *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15th December, 1933.

in you I take everything in good part. You would see me more than ever, if you knew how I thought of you in all things. I went to the Grande Chartreuse, and you have had some of my impressions when I am in Italy. You shall have a record from me by month. Italy! Aye, if I go there, for I cannot make myself yet that I am going there. Keep me in your thoughts for you are often in mine. A pure and unselfish affection is one of my greatest solations. That sanctuary you offer me; and often I avail myself of it. I might have quoted to you what Fontaine said.

The bright and happy time you wish me does not tell. I am still beset by the same troubles and sometimes they are very acute indeed. Working furiously is the only thing that affords me any escape from them. A month now I have had this open wound in my leg. It's not healed yet. The doctor at the Hydro here tells that the bone was fractured and slightly depressed to the head of the tibia, and that some little splinters have to come away. That will mean another fortnight of it; but he assures me that there is no danger. I shall be here until the 6th October: so if you want to write to me between now and the 1st, send the letter here. That would allow six days for it to get to Angoulême.

You were wrong in supposing that I only cared to be with twenty people in view. I was referring to the things: not to everything.

Horses, carriages (except the tilbury) have all been sold, and the men dismissed. My expenses in Paris are

limited to my rent, interest amounting to eighty-nine francs per month and a cook for my mother. When I'm on my travels, I shan't spend more than three hundred francs a month and I'm going to put money by in order to pay off my mother's loan. Is that wise, do you think?

How you misjudge me in supposing that I am incapable of the sort of virile affection you describe, and in condemning me to the sort of woman you take it I have here, and whom you portray as your fancy prompts you. You have been unjust in several of your estimates. I, sold to a political party for a woman!<sup>1</sup>—a man who has had nothing to do with women for a whole year!<sup>1</sup> Your view of the matter is altogether distorted. A man to whom the very idea of prostitution is abhorrent, who looks on every pleasure that does not originate in and return to the soul as something to be ashamed of! Ah, you owe me some amends! I have had no such thoughts as those which you ascribe to me. I have a horror of anything in the nature of seduction, because it is alien to pure and genuine feeling.

You have grotesquely distorted the creatures of my imagination. One must accept the drawbacks as well as the advantages of a talent. I implore you, understand me better. You attach a great deal more importance than I do to the frivolous satisfaction of cutting a dash in the Bois. It's just an artist's craze, a childish whim. My flat is a pleasure, a necessity, like having clean linen, or a bath. I have a right to wear silk if I want to, because to-morrow, if I was obliged to, I would go back

without repining, without a sigh, to an artist's garret, a bare garret, rather than part with my good name or sell myself to anybody Oh, do not slander one who loves you and remembers you with pride in his hours of stress Great labours are counterbalanced by great dissipations That is a perfectly simple thing, and there is no harm in it Fox had his mistresses, gambled, drank hard and so forth, yet he never sold himself Do you think I would abandon the world of ideas and the chance of earning a European reputation with the *Essai sur les Forces Humaines*, for the world of politics, if I did not feel certain in my own mind that I should make a mark in it and be able to render a service to my country? Give me credit for a little good sense !

Adieu Notwithstanding my dislike of leaving a sheet blank, I must send this off to you to-day, and it's just on post time I have had a heart-to-heart talk with you, and of course I've taken longer over it than I should have done

Be sure and remember me all round, not forgetting M Larreguy even, if you see him, and mind that I say just what I ought to say to the neighbours, to everybody, to M Bergès, my electioneering adviser Adieu Affectionate greetings and a shake of the hand to M Carraud The *Voyage à Java* will be out in November M Grand-Besançon will receive a copy of the Review in which it is appearing

With this goes every good wish my heart can hold  
Your friend,  
HONORÉ

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*Touched by Balzac's protestations, Madame Carraud replied as follows*

[ 27 ]                   The Poudrerie, 30th September, 1832

You are deliciously kind, Honoré You have shown great indulgence about a letter which certainly did give expression to my feelings, but incomplete expression, since it lacked what is so very important with me, I mean the accompaniment of look and gesture I never finish off an idea and always leave a great deal to my hearer's understanding And yet there is nothing to hurry me Is it that I am prompted by an instinctive feeling that life is too short for all the things I should like to do? I don't know I could not bring myself to think you would sell yourself, for I love you

But I did want to tell you that the party on which you rely, and for which I have a profound contempt, will have recourse to a woman, not a commonplace one (such an one would leave you a free hand) but an ethereal creature, who, though playing her part unconsciously, will serve as their unwitting instrument I can find little to say as to your ideas of government, besides, dear Honoré, I am not so foolish as to express an opinion about something beyond my horizon, the outcome of which is still uncertain But where I do feel on surer ground is in the moral sphere There I am on all fours with everyone else Your idea is to make use of a political party in order to advance yourself, and then, once your end is gained, to cheat it of all the hopes it had reposed in you You will prove a better man than they had any idea of, but all the same

you will have deceived them Is not that a blot on your scutchcon, a shadow on your fair fame? I cannot bear it, even though its removal should inflict pain Besides, I ask, why should it be? Your vocation summons you to the leadership You think, and so do I, that you have it in you to satisfy the countless demands which the revolution has called forth Why not concentrate all your talents to that end? Why not bring out your ideas on political economy in your writings? Why not aim at an intellectual primacy, rely on your brains, to which, you may be sure, no one would refuse the homage they deserve Do not pin yourself down to any particular political party. Deal in ideas pure and simple, ideas that hold good in every age, and you will come to the fulfilment of your desires But to expose yourself to the hazards of a party election and to be compelled to write that civil war is a good thing, when, in the *Physiologie du Mariage*, it is declared an infamy to bring foreigners into the country! But there! I will not go on discussing that You will not understand that, if you do not come into direct contact with the people, if, that is to say, you view them merely with the detachment of an artist, you cannot get a clear idea of their needs and aspirations Only, Honoré, do not risk defeat at the elections Write on politics, on political economy, but from an independent standpoint, and not under the patronage of anyone, no matter who Then your success will be assured Why, in my district, neither Royalist nor Republican will put up There's no one But the electors must have something to go on, some literature that

all can understand In this way, a thousand constituencies are yours for the price of one Do not forget, dear, that the Royalists are fiercely criticised, and that people would rather have the stupidest of Moderates than a Royalist Between them and the nation, stand their faults and the nation's They are, rightly or wrongly, contemned by the masses and, do what you will, you cannot have a government without the masses, any more than, to quote the common proverb, you can jug a hare without the hare Look at la Vendée, a region notoriously devoted to them They were in such a tiny minority there that they all had to behave like cut-throats and bandits<sup>1</sup> as there were not enough of them for organised murder I quite agree with you in thinking that they can only live under the protection of the principles you set forth, but they won't live like that, and you'd always be deceiving them My instinct tells me that, and instinct, where moral questions are concerned, does not err I am perfectly aware that any number of imposing arguments will be adduced in your support But when they are brushed aside, the old lesion will be as plain to the view as ever M Bergès has just been here He assures me that here, among the legitimists, you will get nearly all the votes and that, since you are willing to be taken in tow by anyone, you are sure of success They have no one and, in despair, have taken on some wretched trimmer But there will be no nominations this year, unless something very unforeseen occurs That does not mean

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the rising in May, 1832, in favour of the Duchesse de Berry

that it will do to neglect your chances As for any reconciliation of ideas between us, that could never be, because I cannot allow that, in order to bring good to pass, we can start from a false basis and from a principle in which we don't ourselves believe

And so, in my eagerness to see you established in the place where you have such need to be, there is a certain amount of self-abnegation, because, my dear, the day when you come into power, we shall be no more than a memory to one another I should still love you enough perhaps to keep up a friendly connexion with you, but I could never have anything in common with the sort of people you would then have about you You hold up your hands in horror at a social *mésalliance*, I am far more shocked at an intellectual one In that respect, everyone should keep his station I shall give up talking politics to you, after this It would pain me too much It hurts me to see you giving up a part of yourself for the sake of someone who will thrust you aside at the first opportunity I firmly believe that if you gave up your literary career for the time being, so that you might throw yourself whole-heartedly into politics, you yourself, single-handed, could compass the revolution which you are looking to foreigners and to civil strife to bring to pass Then having climbed to the top of the tree, what matters the name your royalty goes by? Dirt for dirt, Bourbon for Bourbon, what does it matter? 'Tis the wish of a spirit who would fain see itself mirrored in your own I cannot be a judge of your party methods, but I am a natural judge of the people you employ, and a stern one of

the people who dare to employ you Fancy you, a mere tool! Good heavens! Though you'd be a keen one it is true and like enough to cut the hands of anyone who mishandled you But everyone is not like that Oh, yes, I know that perfectly well! Farewell, then, to politics They will be a gulf between us It will be like death, and remembrance will become my religion

I must needs believe you about the money question, but your odious reviews! There are plenty of hateful people with whom you have dealings, as I know only too well M Dupac, writing to me from Gravelines, says that he has heard of your folly in those parts and that he's in despair about it Who, then, has put about this slander? You'll never be able to destroy it completely You are too good natured You put too much trust in what people tell you Don't lose Delphine Gay's letter Show it about in Paris, even if it irks you so do so Show it even in her own salon Oh, no, a man like you never ought to be tied up to a woman If I had been your wife, your lawful spouse, I would have helped in the expansion of so great a soul, I would have been like an extra eye to you, an understanding eye, I would have brought you, by way of dowry, for your critical acceptance, all the womanly delicacy which I could command But that would have needed a very deep affection because it would have meant giving up that pensive, contented life which is all in all to me A man like you cannot, and should not, devote himself exclusively to the happiness of any one individual The destiny to which fate calls you is at

once sterner and more glorious You need to marry a woman who would consent to be eclipsed by you, and whose very self-effacement would be a jewel in her crown, who would talk to you and love you when you so desired, but never otherwise How deeply am I convinced of that! So you are going to Italy! Alone? I trow not! As you say, travel broadens the mental outlook, but if you have it in mind to enter politics, is it a good thing to go so far away? I am afraid—it makes me blush to say so, and perhaps I do you wrong, but I am afraid you are modelling yourself on Chateaubriand, and you ought to imitate no one! Be yourself, *yourself*, I say You understand?

I cannot quite enter into all your troubles I am sorry about them all the same But your leg? Be careful of that, you are no light weight, and if you go taking any sort of exercise until it is quite well, this Italian journey will be bound to aggravate the trouble Wait till the wound is completely healed before exposing yourself to this further strain I should have written you before, but my illness was severe enough to prevent me Your letter did me good, but I wish I could have written to you sooner Mon Dieu, why are you compelled to think about ways and means and cutting down expenses? Get married, Honoré, though we have everything to lose by your so doing, since a new and absorbing affection in your heart would obscure and contract the place we hold in it But countless reasons make it necessary for you to marry It handicaps a man to be single If he wants a good post, and the influence to secure it, he must be married It is a convention we've

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got to obey Moreover, it is a salutary convention, because a single man looks on unmoved at his country's troubles, whereas a man with a wife and family has more interests at stake Then again a wife would look after your worldly affairs and relieve you of that burden That is telling you the sort of wife you ought to choose

You seem to quarrel with my opinion of the present attraction, but, Honoré, she led you on, and you are not happy I don't understand that sort of thing in a love-affair, or in anything else I can understand a man of artistic temperament doing all sorts of wild things, and, contrary to what you say, I always accept an event, and a quality, with all its consequences But these gilded, these far too aristocratic, extravagances, are too much for me I have not strength enough for them I have not seen much life, and I'm glad I haven't

The other day, dame Rose<sup>1</sup> came in, quite unexpectedly, to apologise for her behaviour to you during the early days of your visit People speak of you with the sort of warmth and yearning they evince for what is past and gone Across the way, there are sighs and a changing figure

Come here whenever you like and everyone will bid you welcome Ourselves I need not instance

I have seen Mme Larreguy who talks of you with much interest

Good-bye Auguste returns in a week's time

*Balzac's stay in Savoy was drawing to a close On the*

<sup>1</sup> Dame Rose, i.e. Madame Grand-Besançon 'Across the way'—that means Madame Séguin, wife of M. Grand-Besançon's secretary

*10th October, we find him at Geneva, writing to Madame Carraud:*

[ 28 ]

[ Geneva ] 10th October [ 1832 ]

Mon Dieu, here I am again, beset by greater worries than any I've yet experienced I'm obliged to abandon my Italian journey. My mother is leaving my house She says she cannot look after my affairs any more, and as I've absolutely no one whom I can saddle with them, no one whose time I can wholly monopolise, I must stay in France until I have settled the whole thing up I don't want to go to Paris I should be constantly interrupted I should like to take up my quarters some little way out, and not let anyone know my whereabouts, so as to avoid the gibes of the sort 'of people who are resolved to jest at every thing and would tell me I was a weathercock I have so many worries that I simply cannot tell you about them Only, if things can't be fixed up as I want them to be somewhere near Paris, I shall come down close to you at la Poudrerie You see how I rely on you, and how frankly I confess it I've got to work without a break all through October, November, December and January And if I am to do that, I must have some distractions I have not had any, and I've been dreadfully lonely for a year past I must do Madame de C[ astries ] the justice to say that she generously and bravely offered to come and shut herself up with me in a house in the country But she has too much need of Italy I refused her offer If the hazards of my destiny so will

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it, I see no reason why I should not be in Italy in February But, dear, what a business it is !

As far as money goes, my financial position will improve in the course of the next four months I shall be free from every tie, I shall keep the most burdensome one though my obligations to my mother, which she is always bringing up against me with a harshness that will be the death of me

So, in any case, we shall see each other, for I shall make a détour in your direction in February, so as to kiss your hands, on my way to Marseilles I have suffered a lot since I had your last letter, suffered unconscionable ills, instinctive pains born of my artistic temperament Adieu, think of me, as of one weighed down by the burden of toil and affliction

If you answer this, address your letter *poste restante*, Nemours, Seine et Marne It is there I expect to get an answer that will enable me to fix my quarters or to come on to you, you who have been so good and so kind over a poet's tribulations Thank you from my heart a thousand times !

I've got a shirt belonging to you which was put in with my things by mistake, and a collar Housewives like to keep their dozens intact I will bring them back with me Your neighbour can read the *Voyage à Java* in the *Revue de Paris* for October or the beginning of November Remember me most kindly to everyone To you I send no message You can guess what I would say The Major will accept a grasp of a hand that never has anything 'aristocratic' about it in his eyes

Just a word, dear one, about the trick you suppose I intend playing off on my party Nothing of the sort Heavens, no ! Everything I intend doing will be put into print, proclaimed and made public from the very first I don't want to deceive anyone, ever, not even a woman Deception is always a crime

Good-bye again By the way, my bookseller tells me of a fourth edition of the *Romans et Contes philosophiques* to be published immediately I shall have two copies, and I hope to make a present of one of them to the Commissioner I want to prove to him something he is doubtful about, namely that, political opinions and convictions apart, I am a sound fellow and no humbug I only put on the aristocrat to the common herd and it's a dangerous game to play , in love-affairs too, where the woman cannot be too much of the fine lady, even as you are, yes, you, Madame Zulma, so bewitchingly attired, you piece of dainty femininity !

You've won your bet ! There's not a line of *La Bataille* written But I've handed in no end of a lot of copy

Adieu A loving kiss on your soft, sweet-scented hands

I should like to bring you back some pretty thing or other from Geneva

HONORÉ

In Geneva, Balzac and Madame de Castries separated, and the former found the calm and sequestered retreat which he needed with Madame de Berny in her little country house at La Bouleauière, near Nîmes. But it was not

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*possible for him to stay on there, and Madame Carraud promptly offered him the peace and quietude of La Poudrerie*

[ 29 ]      La Poudrerie, 16th evening [ October 1832 ]

Will you then, never get any peace, my poor Honoré ! Haven't you got enough worries and troubles in your artistic life, temperamental worries, without having material worries added to their number ? Poor, poor Honoré ! Yes, come here and refresh your spirit with the contact of a true and very tender friendship You will be quiet here and far away, if not free, from every sort of vexation You will have but few distractions and they of the most ordinary description Whatever I may have in me responsive to the hidden cravings of your spirit is too vague, too ill-defined to be of any use to you But if you give me the winter, you will not feel any thing to gall you in the sort of animal life you ought to live

I am adopting you as a son, and will take all the management on myself Auguste Borget, who is here, is about to start for Berry and he asks me to tell you that, if you like, he will see to the settling of your financial affairs in Paris, he will be there very shortly and would call at Nemours in order to get your instructions He has an aptitude for this sort of thing He was not in a bank three years for nothing You can rely on him absolutely He is entirely devoted to your interests Once all that is settled, what is there to hinder you from coming right on here ? If your mother leaves your flat, I cannot see what you will want of a

cook, you will then have done with those little daily cares that take up so much of one's life And then, when you are afloat again, when you have suffered my sorrow, but caressing, hands to calm your brow, you shall go and bask in the Italian sunshine, rid of all those carking cares which would have hindered the full and free enjoyment of the manifold delights that await you there

For she loves you, if she has proposed to bury herself with you in the heart of the country And the love of a beautiful woman is sweet, very sweet, to the heart of an artist who lives with the ideal woman imaged in his soul

A true affection is a soothing pillow for a soul that has drunk deep of the cup of bitterness Lean upon me, then, without stint, and be assured that I rejoice in your happiness Fate owes you rich amends for so dolorous a life I think you are right not to go to Paris, although, seeing the height you have attained, the stupid babble of the mob should be a matter of indifference to you However, when one is so much in evidence, it is no use to compel a disagreeable measure of attention I have been asking my heart whether there is not a modicum of selfishness in my thus approving of your plan, and whether the fear, lest, amid all that dazzling throng, you should forget your promised visit to us here, is not at the bottom of it But no, putting myself out of the question, I think you are doing the right thing You shall work as, and when, you like Madame Larregui is, according to all reports, a woman of distinction There will be some *soirées*

for you at Angoulême My old calash will always be at your disposal There is a strictly royalist club in the town on which you can rely and for which, if there is an election, you will be a godsend Mon Dieu ! You make me wish I had a lot of money, and I have become financially ambitious ever since I got to know the difficulties you are in Why haven't I got thirty thousand francs to put at your disposal? Monetary troubles should never rend your heart But since this trial has fallen to your lot, as though to complete and perfect your spiritual education, bear it with fortitude, and with fortitude and perseverance do your best to heal it No more useless expenditure Come here, and, when you are in Paris, live quietly, rely on my friendship, and because of it, I will do all I can to relieve you from your material anxieties, and those which I cannot relieve, I will share with you Good-bye As I am anxious to answer your letter by return, I cannot say everything I would, but if you understand that I am expecting you, though I don't intend to stake anything on the billiard-match, my letter will be clear enough Bring all the linen you've got that wants mending, and I will see to it for you Make use of me, as Ivan will one day, I trust you to do that at any rate

Carraud thinks the world of you, why are our circumstances so cramped?

I embrace you, if you will let me

*Balzac accepted at once, and wrote off from Nemours  
(La Bouleaurière) on the 26th October*

[ 30 ]

Nemours [ 26th October 1832 ]

I can't tell you how grateful I felt when I read your kind and affectionate letter: although I counted on it with the assurance of La Fontaine when betaking himself to Madame d'Hervart's<sup>1</sup> Yes I shall go to Angoulême and be near you for two whole months, but I cannot get there before the 1st December. The sudden change of climate has given me a bad cold on the chest and I feel too ill to travel I shall stay here till I am well, then I shall come on to you.

My troubles have nothing to do with money, for I never made more by my pen But I thank you from my heart for all that you said in your letter on the subject.

As for those little bachelor requirements in which you take such a touching interest, I always, and of set purpose buy new things as soon as the least thing begins to go wrong with the old This always makes my mother shudder, as it would any other careful housewife

But I accept Auguste's offer with a handshake full of friendship, of kindly feeling and of true and lasting affection. It seems probable that my brother-in-law and my sister will either be leaving Paris, or will have too much business of their own on hand to spend much time over mine, and so, if Borget does not shrink from so burdensome a friendship and if he can be to me

<sup>1</sup> La Fontaine, after the death of Madame de la Sablière, encountered M. d'Hervart in the rue Saint Honoré. The latter was coming to offer him the hospitality of his house in the rue de la Plâtrière 'That's just where I was going,' was La Fontaine's reply

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what I will be to him, well, I shall embrace with the same ardour this exemplar of true friendship which I used to pursue so ardently long since, and whose fair and noble ideal has hitherto found fulfilment in you alone

I shall be seeing you, then, in a month from now, and it will be better for me to tell you all about my little troubles sitting on your sofa in your little boudoir, than to write them down in a letter

God grant that I may hop straight from Angoulême to Italy when February comes, having got clear of all those literary tasks of mine which have been dragging me down like chains

I am not thanking you for all the goodness that your letter contains The statement that you won't back me in the billiard match is rather a blot on it, though

Tell the Commissioner that the *Voyage à Java* will certainly be out on the 11th November I will see to it that they send him, from me, the number or numbers of the *Revue [de Paris]* in which the article appears It has been carefully corrected To please him, I have done a tree-fern which fairly wipes out the *bengali* and the *upas*

I have been lucky with my Angoulême work *La Femme abandonnée* has been all the rage and *La Grenadière* comes out the day after to-morrow They prophesy a great run on handkerchiefs I have not dedicated it to my dear and dainty hostess, because the work and its scope were too paltry You must allow me, Madame Zulma, to do something on a

grander scale for one who is so lavish towards me<sup>1</sup>

I have such a lot of writing to get through that I must wish you a friendly good-bye, treating you as a comrade, as you would have me do. Good-bye for a little while, then, for unless *she*<sup>2</sup> carries me off, there is nothing to prevent my being with you the greater part of this winter. Even if there had been any selfishness in your advising me to keep away from Paris, do you imagine I should have blamed you? Mon Dieu, the clasp of a loving hand would bring me a thousand miles! Just think how seldom you can find an affection real enough to attain the wondrous selfishness of love. But I love *you*, too, very dearly, and always shall.

Do not forget to remember me to everybody and receive, on those sweet, soothing and most dainty hands, a kiss of gratitude and friendship. As for the Major I offer him an Englishman's handshake, which jars you from the wrist down to the midrib, and that is where the heart is.

Until the 30th November, address me *post restante*, Nemours

*October goes by, November comes and Balzac is still at La Bouleauière. Before the month is out, he writes to say he's coming.*

[ 31 ]

[ Nemours, end November 1832 ]

Alas! I shall hardly be with you before the 7th December! I shall stay three days in Paris and two at

<sup>1</sup> Balzac, in 1838, dedicated *La Maison Nucingen* to her

<sup>2</sup> The Marquise de Castries

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Tours If I get out of the two days at Tours, I shall come on to La Poudrerie on the 5th Thanks for your parcel Until the 30th, I shall be here, at Nemours So, until that date, send on anything that may come to me, although 'that person,' having now embarked, will not write to me until she gets to Naples

How can anyone be jealous of me? It argues a singular misunderstanding of me to suppose that I would willingly enter into rivalry with such a lover and such a husband<sup>2</sup> A quarter of an hour spent in your society of an evening is worth more than all the felicities of a night with that fair lady, and your vellum-like hand, since so you will call it, is infinitely more precious to me than all the delights with which you threaten me

Didn't your ears tingle on Monday, the 19th? Borget came to see me We talked about you nearly the whole day Alas<sup>1</sup> if you had heard us you would have been very proud of being so dearly loved, you would indeed, by two young men who think no end of you and give you the primacy, among all the rest, two spirits that had the proud fortune to understand your own, so out of the common, so constantly lavish of fresh ideas and novel sentiments as it is You are a religion To be with you, I think, is to be a better man At least one is always something to the good Modesty forbids me to tell you by word of mouth all I think about you But, pen in hand, one gathers courage Well then, far, far away from us though you were, you were clearly understood We deplored the nature

<sup>1</sup> The Marquise de Castries

<sup>2</sup> Prince Victor von Metternich and the Marquis de Castries

of your environment, with its humiliating trivialities, and we tried to think of some way of getting you out of it, as one tries to clear away weeds round a delicate and cherished flower I've thought of something You will see if it can be done I think it can, and I shall be the means of your deliverance At all events, my coming will be of some use to you

My income is getting considerable My publishers guarantee me thirty thousand francs this year, over and above my newspaper articles And, in eight years' time, they will pay me down the capital of that handsome revenue Ah, if you could see me at work day and night, never getting more than six hours' sleep, you would say the money was well earned

What a treat for me to come and be stirred up by the Major, and to find in you one of the three or four people with whom I can always exchange ideas, always get something valuable from, always understand, even when we don't agree !

I need a woman like you But I have no cause to complain I am on terms of friendship with some very noble spirits I have received a divine letter from the Russian, or Polish, princess

Auguste told me that the information about Java was apocryphal, as I feared it was I have done the necessary, and the *Voyage à Java* is considerably modified You will be reading it soon, as I'm sending a copy to la Poudrerie for M Grand-Besançon

Can you make head or tail of Laure? She was to send you my fourth volume, and she now tells me to take it to you I did you the honour to suppose you were in

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a hurry for it, and said it was to be sent to you Alas ! *Louis Lambert* still lacks something I have again been in too much of a hurry It needs further development in places and a lot of other things that I am going to see to, so that the next edition will be much altered and corrected If you should see anything wanting in it, be sure and tell me

Adieu, most gratefully beloved one Do not forget to give an Englishman's handshake to the Major, that idle, good-for-nothing Major, who robs the Government, the Country, of what he could do in science and original work ! He, too, will have to be stirred up

Good-bye, then Soon we shall have two good months to ourselves, shan't we ? God knows what I've got to do in order to call my soul my own, and to get free of my pecuniary and literary obligations

So, from the 1st December, keep all my letters for me

Your HONORÉ

*Balzac promised he would get to la Poudrerie on the 5th December Madame Carraud therefore had time to write him one more letter at Nemours*

[ 32 ] [ From la Poudrerie, 28th November 1832 ]

To-day is the 28th, so I've got time for another letter *Louis Lambert* ' only arrived to-day I will talk to you about it another time The book was accompanied by a kind and charming letter from Laure, one of those letters which inspire an answer worthy of them You

<sup>1</sup> The first edition, which appeared in the *Nouveaux Contes Philosophiques*

were a little unfair to the ' person ' She still writes to you ! So in ten days at the latest you will be here, at this hospitable board, which is so highly honoured by your presence Your arrival is looked forward to with feverish impatience Little, indeed, are you suspected of any hostile intentions So you want to get me out of this morass in which, despite my tact, I am likely to get irrevocably involved I have no idea how it's to be done, because you know that I cannot, and will not, have a quarrel<sup>1</sup> That would be a foolish thing to do Would you shoulder all the resentment that such a breach might very well engender? That would be devotion indeed ! In a more ordinary mind it would betoken an arrogant desire to raise whatever impinges upon it to its own level In you, it is something better than that I am good at heart, so much I can swear to, and that's the main thing Anything else, for a woman not in the public eye, would be pure excess

I am truly glad to hear that things are going so well with you With this thorn removed, you will be freer in your mind No burdensome obligation will warp it in its own despite It's good to have money, to earn it oneself, and by means of what is best in one You work cruelly hard, there's no denying that, but what lofty repose must be yours on those divans, the fruit of your intellectual labours ! There is greater independence in the ease that comes of an idea that has remained an idea, than in one which descends to the material level to achieve a definite result Your work, which was born of you, by you has been completed

<sup>1</sup> Doubtless with the Grand-Besançons

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When the price of it is given you, no alien hand has marred it That is a fine thing ! I really believe that a woman like me, only a little bit more womanly, would have suited you For an artist, the sort of woman he needs is an unselfish one She must know how to efface herself when her companion quits the world of realities, how to welcome him back with a smile on her lips when he returns to it again She must needs be tolerant in all things, for a man who lives on dreams is bound sometimes to wander from the path, but her tolerance must not be obtruded, for tolerance is bitter to those who are its object It demands that she should be able to live on the fame which, in secret, she waters with her tears The joy of happiness shared in common is not for her There can be no mingling of life's experiences between the man who wins glory again and again and flings it from him, and the woman whose greatness of soul is measured by her self-repression It demands oh ! it demands a host of things ! but all would have been possible to me, to me who sacrifice my longings day by day without any recompense but my peace of mind I came upon the scene too late by several years Besides, dear, you want a woman who can do the honours of a Parisian salon, and for that one must have a presence But I, though I am well enough in a circle of intimate friends, am awkward and ill-at-ease among a crowd I should be greatly thrilled, no doubt, but then I should be too remote, my wholly masculine probity being timorous as maiden modesty But, with another envelope, yes, I should have been the very woman for you, I should have loved you so

It's a long time now since the poor major stimulated anyone Every single minute of mine brings more to me, literally, than whole days bring to him As for moral work, everyone is his own judge, and I never ask him any questions Honoré, what a scourge is idleness What a tragedy is a broken life It was that English prison which made such havoc of my husband's career, and which brought on that state of moral inertia over which I shed secret and scalding tears I have my son !!! Six months more and the prison would have finished its work, and Carraud would have set eyes on France no more One thing, and one thing only, survived that lamentable shipwreck, and that was his strict integrity, which proves that the mind has well-defined compartments As to what the Government loses by Carraud's inertia, I can't help that The Government, when it likes, is always well served A good, straightforward government would get all it liked out of the Major But to struggle with a host of schemers who tear and rend you because they have got it in their heads that you want the little shred of the power which they are squabbling about among themselves ! No, in times like these we are going through to-day, the wise man keeps his mouth shut What a world we live in ! Let your Utopia come to pass, your wholesome government come into power and Carraud, as soon as he is quite sure that you are not crediting him with a desire for money or place, Carraud will give you chapter and verse for all he says He won't be hard up for information He will give an account of the facts, and you may be certain that the most rigid integrity

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has presided over his observations My neighbour has come with moist and glistening eyes to ask me to give you her thanks and that with all the gush imaginable

Adieu, Honoré, dear Honoré, may you always elect us among your friends, and may we also, whatever fortune may be yours, always enjoy your familiar discourse! We are as susceptible as the general public You must send me word of the exact date of your arrival so that the carriage may meet the diligence It gets here late now, after dark

ZULMA

I know there is something Auguste wants you to bring for me If it bothers you, leave it behind in Paris Don't cumber yourself up with luggage Worrying over details does not suit you at all

*Yet another blow On the night of the 4th Mine Cariaud gets a letter (now missing) which fills her with dismay*

[ 33 ]

5th December 1832

I am grieved at your letter, Honoré! It came last night, and where am I to write to you now? Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! And to think that you have run away with the idea that we are not always eager to welcome you with open arms You were not having one of your clear-headed days when you thought such a thing as that, and perhaps you won't come! And then you will blame me! Honoré, I am vexed with you

Adieu, I've only just time to tell you I am expecting you

ZULMA

Before setting out for Angoulême, Balzac had several things to see to in Paris He is therefore obliged to make a halt there Madame Carraud gets alarmed.

[ 34 ]

[ la Poudrerie ] 12th December, [ 1832 ]

You have set foot in Paris, Honoré, will you be able to resist the allurements of that unrivalled place? I have almost given up counting on you, now that I know you are in that city I don't see how you are going to get clear of all the various obligations that keep you chained where you are, and to lose you, to wipe you out of my life for these few days is a grief too great for me to let you guess at So you want to make *Louis Lambert* nothing short of perfect Oh yes, have a care for your reputation, there are so many who will be the better for it You don't tell me why you left Nemours I was afraid at first that it was on account of your health, I was worried about it until I got a letter from Auguste, who said he had dined with you and was going to be your neighbour I am glad, for a host of reasons I hope he came up to your expectations and that he is yours, body and soul I am glad that you are calmer than you were some time ago It seems to me that the pace which devours your life leaves you no time to enjoy its worth

Finish up with your publishers then and do *La Bataille* at your leisure *La Bataille!* It was to be finished by the end of this year? My dear, you think Time is as elastic as your own imagination You squeeze it in advance and think you are going to get more out of

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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it than it can possibly yield, with scarce a thought for reality which, in the shape of M Carraud, offers itself to you with mathematical precision I should like this perpetual constant dreaming on things of the mind I indulge in it myself, but only for minutes at a time Then the years press on and, though you concentrate more thought into a second than any other living man into a day, you are still unable to win sufficient leisure to look back upon the way you have come And the glance with which you scan the future is so fleeting, and takes such little account of the regions through which it passes, that the profit it should bring amounts to nothing I should like to be the material part of your whole life Really, I was the woman predestined for you I hark back to this idea, because anything more material than I would fill the rôle too imperfectly There can be no alliance between a highly subtilised intellect and one wedded to things material, and much too closely wedded, to allow of any flight into another sphere No, as a matter of fact, I shall not be going to Frapesle in February Auguste is mistaken, I must have flowers when I go, I must have the moon of May, and perhaps of June, for an unhappy state of affairs is waiting for me there! my poor father is going down hill Honoré, don't let us grow old It's horrible, hideous To outlive oneself, and the affections one called into being, to be out of tune with everything and everybody Horrible! I know well enough that when I have fulfilled my mission, that is to say when my son has reached the age of twenty, I shall not have enough moral courage to sever myself

from a life of uselessness But I hope at all events to live to myself and to refrain from practising that hateful tyranny which asserts itself even over the mind and which even filial reverence is unable to condone But I am a poor creature, with not above ten or twelve more years to live, thank God !

I did not tell you that the *Revue de Paris*<sup>1</sup> had done wonders for the lady next door The husband is not there It was with glistening eyes and a tremulous voice that I was asked to convey to you the lady's thanks My volcaméria is in bud, I will have it put in your room You treat me with a gentleness born wholly of your affection for me I am bound to be boorish in my ways, having been brought up mainly with men, more or less completely self-educated and, in my intimate everyday life, now and always completely alone But I have avoided merging in the common type, and that is something Don't answer this letter, then Don't make writing to me a duty Nothing could be more distasteful to me It would be giving me something with one hand and taking it away again with the other Settle matters, then, with your print and paper people, and if you've any time over, devote it to appeasing jealous, restless, exacting natures whose affection you might lose if you did not pander to them My share, I know quite well, you will give to no one, no one would want it, I am concited enough to think that I alone possess the necessary faculty for assimilating it, I feel that, seeing you are

<sup>1</sup> No doubt the issue of the 25th November, containing the *Voyage à Java*

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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what you are, I cannot lose you How could I wish to change our relationship?

Forgive me for thinking so, my dear, my very dear, but it seems to me that you ought always to be sufficiently rich not to jeopardise your reputation, and that, even in your garret in the rue Lesignières, with your income of four hundred francs, you ought to have sacrificed the first *Louis Lambert* and given notice to buyers that the new edition would be given to anyone who brought back the old one In my eyes, it is more than a mere question of reputation, it is a question of honest dealing, and one is never too poor to be honest

If I hurt you, I am sorry I embrace you with a full heart and as you would have me do, but I cannot alter my opinions It won't be your hours of haste which the stern judgment of the public will make you expiate They will be fair, without suspecting it That is what often happens

Did Laure tell you I have had a letter from her, a letter that sparkled like her wit I have guessed how it is we lost touch with each other so often, like the snapping of a golden thread that has no alloy in it The reason is that I am not witty enough for her, and I must freely confess that perhaps I don't set quite enough value on wit, I have travelled farther than that, I like to get at the bottom of everything and it is to that I owe the conservation of my moral convictions, the one real happiness, beyond the reach of men and things

Adieu, I should like to feel that you were upstairs in your room here, and to beguile myself by listening to your lightest movements, for I am downstairs in

the dining-room It is beginning to get cold Nevertheless we are afraid there won't be any ice for the ice box That won't be very pleasant, don't you know What Sybarites we are !

Carraud cordially returns your greetings Adieu, and try not to put off your visit any longer

Madame Raison has sent for a bonnet from Herbault's<sup>1</sup> especially to please you.

*Balzac promptly tries to set her mind at rest*

[ 35 ]

[ Paris ] 16th December 1832

Be well assured of it, your letters make me very happy Have no fear about that I am working day and night in order to get away as soon as possible I am shut up in my own room, no one comes I am sure to come and see you; but exactly what day, I cannot say

As to what you say about reprinting *Louis Lambert*, you are quite right But, anxious as I am to put the matter to rights, the thing is impracticable, materially and morally It would take too long to tell you why

Ah ! you will be proud of *Louis Lambert* ! Many are the hours, days and nights I have spent on that work since the day I saw you No one will know what it has cost me You shall have a fine copy But I urge you, by the solicitude you always entertain for me and my affairs, never to let my books out of your hands, your own and Monsieur Caraud's Auguste is kindness itself towards me I am dazed with work

Good-bye I am going back to a 'Droll Tale,'

<sup>1</sup> The famous milliner of the rue Neuve-Saint Augustin

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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interrupted in order to read your letter and to enjoy the sole distractions that come my way, those of the affections

At those who criticised *my Marquises* the two last Sundays of this month,<sup>1</sup> I fling one of the broadest compositions I have done It is entitled, *Les Matana* You, as a mother, must try and read it

All my love to you, and the usual greetings to the Major Good-bye for a little while I should very much like you to have re-read *Louis Lambert*, and to have read *Le Médecin de Campagne* by the time I see you again, you will perhaps have an added thoughtfulness in those eyes which are already eloquent of so many beautiful, kind and noble things

I will let you know the day of my departure, which I am hurrying on as fast as I can *La Bataille* has got to appear, otherwise I shall find myself at loggerheads with those printing devils

Adieu, friend to whom, in hours of weariness, I turn so often in quest of sweet repose H

*December passes by, Christmas comes and goes, and still Balzac comes not to la Poudrerie At the end of the year, Madame Carraud writes him as follows*

[ 36 ] [ From la Poudrerie ] the 28th [ December 1832 ]

I was waiting for the Commissioner's return before I wrote you, Honoré I was lulling myself with the possibility that my letter might find you no longer in

<sup>1</sup> He means in the *Revue de Paris*, December, 1832, and January, 1833

the rue Cassini, but alas ! you are anchored there, and to nourish any hopes of your setting sail for la Poudrerie, I should have to count on a favouring wind, and, judging by my past experience, I have little to hope from chance On the 10th, you will be here, I am told But I don't rely on it, since in the same breath, I am assured that you have to be in Paris on the 15th February Oh, I knew perfectly well that once you had set foot in that city, you would be caught in the current and that, while stretching your arms imploringly towards us, the flood would bear you ineluctably away And yet, dear, the commissioner thought you changed and older looking All this head work is telling on you You need a rest Working where you are, and working here, with me, is not at all the same thing Merely to breathe in Paris is hard work in itself, and you've no call to add to your labours I want, therefore, to have you here, not on my own account now, but for the sake of those whose lives depend on you You are expected at Naples, I am told All this travelling about, all this work, what a business it is ! What can I do but take a back seat, I who love you better than any of them And yet I still have hopes, despite myself I had counted so much on you We looked forward to deriving so much pleasure from your merry company I was reposing my spirit in yours, giving it rest from people's selfishness which is always rubbing me up the wrong way Is it not a dreadful thing to have to spend so much virtue in putting up with people who, so far as the affections are concerned, do not appeal to one in the least

Fortunately, I've got something that still makes life worth living, my son ! Oh, you who know everything, even you can't so much as imagine what a son is to his mother, his mother on whom his future depends, who has to teach him to put up with the realities of life, with a dash of idealism for a distraction, and who has, above all things, to implant in him a man's heart, to see to it that he reasons soundly, without dethroning his imagination And then all the pleasures of witnessing his heart and mind expanding day by day and the little flashes which give one an insight of what he will be in years to come Dear Honoré, all the things I've suffered in the past, and you don't know all of them, the everlasting drabness of my life, are not too high a price to pay for some of the moments I spend with my son I have taken him unto myself until time and my watchfulness bring his destined affinity upon the scene I have staked everything on that, everything and I have not got a daughter !

A daughter, to train into a woman, remarkable, unique yet able to keep in the background ! I could make my daughter happy, with the husband whom the fates might grant her I know the secret of that now that I am thirty-six But Ivan ? He must have a wife and not one of those little doll-like things one sees at dances and everywhere one goes Well, Heaven will help me, for first of all I help myself

It is indeed something to have seen someone who has warmed himself at your fire, walked upon your carpets and, at a glance, taken stock of your library So, as soon as I saw him, I enveloped him with my

gaze to wrest from him everything he retained of your atmosphere, and to make it my own I can no longer count on your visit to la Poudrerie The volcaméria has not blossomed Like you it makes me wait in vain, and all my care is unavailing I am going through a period of disappointments, the vases which Lucile [ Nivet ] spoke to you about were cracked in the baking I was setting great store on them It would have been a corner of la Poudrerie in your rooms You will have something you cannot get in Paris, but it will not be the vases

They have come for me to dine at the Commissioner's They have been taking up my whole morning That has robbed you of some good pages but not of the New Year kiss I intended for you I felt so sure there wouldn't be any delay about that Ah, well, I must have patience Put my mind at rest !

*Balzac did not put his mind at rest Quite the reverse He was a prey to the gravest anxieties All hopes of a holiday fled and he finished up the year 1832 in Paris in the Rue Cassini, overwhelmed with work*

*1833 began badly On New Year's Day Balzac wrote to his friend as follows*

[ 37 ]

Paris 1st January, 1833

For days now my courage has been at a low ebb and I have been acutely conscious of the special hardships of my life I am yielding to the craving to find solace in a woman's heart I think I ought to put my thoughts into a book, in order to relieve my mind To begin

### THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULIME

with, my visit to you gets put off day after day. The printers have exhausted my patience. Nothing goes right. I ought to have five lives, and I've only one.

My mother is leaving me. Can you imagine how it hurts me to see her in second-rate surroundings, when I had sacrificed everything so that she should live in style? I shall be all alone. There's no one who can be always with me. I cannot bring myself to seek consolation where my artists do. No shop-girl or paid mistress for me! A woman of distinction would not offer herself, and I who find eighteen working hours out of twenty-four all too little for my purpose, have no time to go plying the drawing-room darling around the skirts of some little female nonentity.

It's all very well trying to live in a world of thought. Nature gave me too much heart for that, and, in spite of everything, I've still got more than ten men inside me. So I am suffering, and suffering the more keenly in that Fortune, while granting me the knowledge of what love is, deprived me of the visible object of it. She gave me a true love which was fated to come to an end<sup>1</sup>. That is horrible! I am a prey to terrible storms of which no one knows the secret. I have no distractions. Nothing assuages these fires which are spreading and will perhaps consume me. An indescribable coldness is now gradually following on what I took to be passion in a woman who came to me not without nobility<sup>2</sup>. I am afraid to ask whence that arises. I recoil

<sup>1</sup> Laure de Berne, Balzac's first mistress (1777-1836), to whom *Louis Lambert* was dedicated in 1832.

<sup>2</sup> The Marquise de Castries.

from drawing the logical conclusions which my own observation tells me I ought to recognise I shut my eyes like a child

Marriage would be a relief But where am I to find a wife?

I had got to that point in my letter when yours arrived<sup>1</sup> I have just read it Ah, mon Dieu, yes, the Commissioner spoke truly, I am wearing myself out But what you will never understand is the yearning, arising from instinct and overwrought nature, which makes me long to be at la Poudrerie Do not imagine that Paris counts for anything with me I never leave my study, I am working myself to death, and that is the truth

I am still hoping to get to la Poudrerie sometime between the 10th and the 15th I assure you that I need a complete rest Late nights and coffee-drinking are killing me I was made for the peace and happiness of home life I would willingly reserve my tales and my talents for the woman of my heart

Not a day passes but I think of you, precisely because I told myself that I should be with you at this moment, instead of which I am here in this room, where, do what I will, I cannot prevent people coming to see me

I am going to try and get my watches sent sooner from Geneva, and then, though I shall be later in starting for Angoulême, I shall stay longer The only reason I want to be here on the 15th February is to take delivery of the things I have ordered and to pay for them If

<sup>1</sup> This letter, though dated Angoulême, 28th December, 1832, bears the post-mark 'Paris, 31st December, 1832'

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÊME

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I am to pay for them, I must see them first, and I alone know what I ordered If the man can send me the things on the 20th January instead of the 15th February, I shall start on the 20th and no external circumstance will prevent me

Good-bye I now return to my idea-factory You do not read the *Revue de Paris*, you don't know my *Lettre à Nodier*, or *Les Marana—Les Marana*, which have shown the most obstinate of my detractors that I am—I won't tell you what, it would perhaps be immodest to repeat it

All affectionate greetings I shall see you soon But I am in the printers' hands I cannot get away till *Louis Lambert*, *Le Médecin de Campagne* and the *Contes drolatiques* are out So you see how things stand Besides all that, I have my monthly articles for the *Revue de Paris* and I can't leave before the February instalment is done

Good-bye again All good wishes to the Major

*Greatly moved by this letter, the faithful friend writes back at once*

[ 38 ]

La Poudrerie, the 5th January, 1833

I am much affected by your letter—all of it Poor Honoré, you are an unhappy man ! Despite all the things which make for happiness that Fate has allotted you, they are not enough Your heart is hungry still Oh, I understand it all quite well Fame, money, influence, the delightful pleasures of the mind—all that is nothing

to a man who feels his loneliness, and has no friendly bosom whereon to lay his weary head

If only your ills were imaginary ! But no, a man of your age does not delude himself like that, and although the ingenious invention of the *Peau de Chagrin* applies to you more closely than to anyone else, your plans, which you form so eagerly and then so promptly abandon, are still not enough for so active a mind You are an anomaly among your peers, and, like all exceptional people, you are fated to suffer—and that constantly If you were like other authors, and if a mistress and dissipations were really to your taste But you have kept your soul unsullied, you have things in which you believe, and the delights into which you alone can enter are paid for by the sorrows of a lonely heart

It will always be so, as long as you are a bachelor, for, *mon cher*, what woman would ever esteem herself so highly as to hope to fulfil even the least perfect of your ideals of womanhood? Who will be *Madame de Trente ans* or that delicious heroine of *le Rendez-vous*? And all the rest of them !!! No, you are a great man, and must put up with the consequences of your greatness A woman must be very much in love to acquiesce in taking a position of inferiority in regard to the man she adores One must have lived through all the trials which womankind are heir to, to find any compelling charm in mere self-abnegation And a woman who has known what it is to suffer, no longer feels as she used to do, for her, the world has lost its glamour—and since her attractiveness I really see nothing but marriage

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÊME

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for you I am sure you are eminently suited to the joys it offers and, although you propose to mar it by robbing it of its touching monotony—its most potent charm—you will find in it all you lack, provided only your choice be a wise one

O ! Honoré, don't run away with the idea that life must always be presenting some new and unfamiliar facet to your view Its delicate lights and shades are the most precious thing it offers Just think of all that is implied in the certitude that this same hour we find so sweet to-day, will strike again to-morrow, and the next day, and so on to the end For sterile hearts that would spell *ennui*, for the vulgar, just material well-being But for you it would mean a refining, a sublimation of the spirit Just think for a moment Needless to say, my husband and I do not feel and think alike about everything Our natures are different, and we look at things in a different light Yet, the happiness I am telling you about, is mine I feel it We both of us feel it, in the same degree, though not in the same way I would not exchange it for what, according to current notions, would be called the fullest of lives I have never known a barren moment

But, my dear man, when you marry, you must be the predominant partner, not the slave of a caste, or of this or that body of opinion Don't you think, then, that some nice little woman, with plenty of natural charm, someone capable of understanding you, one who would impose no other burden on your budget than the cost of keeping her—and for that the most modest dowry would suffice—don't you think

that such an one would be better by far than one who while bringing a considerable addition to your income, would yet introduce such confusion into your life as would stop you from being not only a writer, but even a man. And with your talents won't you carve out a fine career for yourself, even though you do have to share its advantages? If you find someone with a dowry, 'so much the better,' say you. But I should be tempted to say 'so much the worse' for Honoré, let me tell you that rich people look on men of brains as a means of entertainment, as mere good company. But they are always just men of brains, never rich men. Every aristocracy is exclusive. The most tolerant of all is undoubtedly the aristocracy of the intellect. Look you now, if some auspicious star had shed its influence upon my marriage, I should have a daughter fifteen years old by now. And she would have been well brought up, that daughter of mine! Oh she would know how to make one happy. But haven't I had every sort of trial to put up with?

Frankly I cannot understand your mother! . . . Ah well! I hope she won't feel sorry for it later on!

A woman above the ordinary, a woman whom you give to understand that you have chosen her from among a number of others won't insist on your courting her. The difficulty will be to make her believe you love her. You are too much on a pinnacle. You must unbend a little and in order to make that position bearable, a few feminine elements should be added to your composition. You have some, as it is. It is not *qua* man that you are so free from egoism, that you are

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

so sensitive to the things of the heart, and that you know so well how to make love. If you were a man and nothing more, the scent of the *volcaméria* would not delight you so. And friendship, the softest, gentlest friendship, suffices not to solice your poor bleeding heart!!

I pity her leaving you! You must have made a very unlucky choice. But why shrink from probing the wound? Light is a potent healer. Don't be afraid of analysing the thing. Your imagination won't suffer from the process. It is fit too soaring for that. Make up your mind what you are suffering and why, and you will be the easier.

Mon Dieu! Why did not the Fates put you and me into the same town? I should have been all you could have wished for in the way of affection. I should have taken up my quarters in the same house as you, and then the *grisette* would not have offended your taste at all. It would have been a case of bliss in two volumes!

Come then as soon as you can. You will find it good here. Nevertheless, if giving up a few days in January will enable you to stay on longer and free your mind from worry, I will make the sacrifice, though it will cost me something. Anyhow come soon. I don't quite see why paying for your jewellery should compel you to remain in Paris. Can't you arrange for Auguste to take the things in for you? Well, I rely on your friendship. If you rob me of your company, Honoré, you won't forgive yourself very easily. One doesn't forget the ills one does. In Paris, however, one breathes a different atmosphere from other places. Going to bed

and staying up are differently arranged there Perhaps the air is inspiring But we love you here, don't forget that

I do not read the *Revue de Paris* regularly because it can't be got here Nevertheless, I hope to see it to-morrow You shall know what I think about your contribution You shall know exactly, because between you and me there could never be any misprision We may differ, but never fail to understand each other, never !

Carraud demands your presence Adieu

*Meanwhile Balzac has just published the beginning of les Marana in the Revue de Paris Madame Carraud, who has read it with enthusiastic delight, writes him as follows*

[ 39 ] [ From la Poudrerie ] 21st January [ 1833 ]

If you have not imposed stringent terms on the *Revue de Paris*, I proclaim you the most happy-go-lucky man in the world That miserable review ! Really, you know it is a poor concern I can perfectly well understand people only wanting the numbers in which your articles appear The others, as a general rule, are flavourless, as well as colourless I have put off telling you so for a long time, because I wanted to be perfectly convinced in my own innermost mind, so as to praise you in a way that would not bring a blush to either of us You are the foremost prose-writer of the time and in my estimation the foremost writer For I rate beautiful and poetic prose, undisfigured by purple patches,

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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very far above verse You are *sui generis*, and all seems insipid in comparison with you How grateful I am to you for eschewing those mental orgies which only bring forth horrors Doesn't it look as if our feelings had lost all their responsiveness when we see the writers of the day offering such meat for our consumption Ah, the truth is that to portray the countless *nuances* which tinge the human heart and shed their glow upon our lives, something more than brains and a knowledge of one's language is required And it is that 'something more' that I like in you However, dear friend, I have some hesitation in adding my voice to the thousands that sing your praises I am afraid my intellectual shortcomings are far greater than I had thought until to-day I have been undergoing a test from which I have not emerged with flying colours I had heard *Faust*, Goethe's *Faust*, so highly praised, and I had seen you aspiring with such diffidence to have *Louis Lambert* mentioned in the same breath with that masterpiece, that I got myself a copy I read it through once, and told myself I had been wool-gathering, so I began it all over again, slowly But I wasn't struck with it, or carried away at all Far from it I must needs know you pretty well to make a clean breast of that, because the preface provided me with a ready-made view of the work, and I might have adopted it Faust seems to me an eminently peculiar character Mephistopheles, to my mind, is not at all the sort of devil to lead him on His temptations are too vulgar I can visualise a work on these lines, with all its singularities, but on a much loftier scale There are some fine philo-

## BALZAC AND MADAME CARRAUD

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sophical passages, but they are so familiar that they convey nothing new in the way of ideas Well, what it comes to is that I am vexed with myself because I dare not be vexed with the book Of course I am not judging the poetry or the style, because I've only a translation to go by The fact is, Honoré, that when I was young, before sorrow and experience had cast their leaden mantle on my eager imagination, I too, like Faust, longed to know the why and wherefore of everything I asked their secrets of those worlds which are so far away that the variations in the diameter of our orbit, however great or small, make no difference to their aspect I thought seriously of killing myself in order to share the sooner in that divine knowledge It was a parching thirst that nothing could satisfy I still hold that, when we have returned to the essence whence we came, we shall participate in its divinity But have we the consciousness of our ignorance, and our former longings? That is the question ! !

Well then, *Lambert*, in my view, and putting all personal predilections aside, is miles above *Faust* I can understand Lambert's madness, his moral languor, followed by his ineffable transports, his second sight, his belief in presentiment, and finally his human love, a tribute paid to humanity, flung over it all, but still enriched by his noble nature

Faust loves like the beasts of the field His Marguerite only loves him for his good looks, and he calls himself the man-god He must needs make a pact with the devil That was right enough at a time when magic

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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to the devil, in order to become a bestial      but I won't go on, for, really, you won't think me worthy of being your literary adviser, but, dear Honoré, I am a woman, and doubtless my mind is not broad enough to take in such ideas

I have read *Les Marana*, only the first part though, for you know that only two people in Angoulême take the *Revue*, and I've been put to all sorts of shifts to get hold of it I like Marana, who is vicious, but not callous It is a fine book, *Les Marana*, and I long to know how Juana's character develops, because I see perfectly well that you have tried to establish two important things

I have had another look at the editorial in the December number, the latest we have I see from it that you've had an accident *Mon Dieu* Is this your horse again? Tell Auguste to send me a line, please! I only hope that this will turn out to be nothing more than an editorial fiction But, if you care for me at all, don't leave me in suspense, it worries me

Yesterday was the 20th, and so another date we had fixed for your coming has gone by Won't you come, then, before you go to Italy—to Italy whether your love is calling you? And now to put the finishing touch on my discomfiture, the volcameria refuses to bloom, despite the fine weather For we are enjoying glorious sunshine and a most life-giving warmth I was very much afraid we should have no ice to give you this summer, but during the only two cold days we had, a ditch in the north meadow froze over and we filled the ice box in one day And well it was we did so,

for there's been no ice to be had here for a long time

Adieu, dear friend I was hoping that, thanks to you, I should not have too dull a time of it this winter But it's done now Ah! Why haven't I any big sins to redeem by this foretaste of purgatory? Have you got any that weigh you down? I will assume them for you *gratis* I am better than your Catholic priests Carraud will insist on impugning your accuracy He loves you cordially all the same The others pretend to be very enthusiastic about you Auguste is the hero of the hour But, come forth, thou wizard, and the worthy Borget will be eclipsed, at least for the time being

*Balzac is too busy to reply at once Meantime Madame Carraud grows anxious. A letter from Laure has depicted his misfortunes and shown him at grips with the most trying difficulties She loses no time in trying to comfort him*

[ 40 ] De la Poudrerie, the 28th January, 1833.

I've just heard from Laure about the fresh troubles that are detaining you in Paris Honoré, dear Honoré, am I never going to see you in smooth water? Your mind ought to be occupied with far higher things Is it always to be warped and distorted, and are these practical preoccupations always going to be a drag on your literary productiveness? She tells me you are losing heart Things really cannot go on like this, Honoré, a man with your gifts ought not to let himself be overborne by what, after all, is merely a mischance

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULIME

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that can't have any serious consequences I can understand that, at first, you must have been seriously, indeed intolerably, put about Your nature, your art and your condition render you too impressionable not to have felt profoundly discouraged to begin with But, having thought it over, I hope you have taken up your pen again, only giving vent to your resentment by ramming it down a little savagely into the ink-pot The fact that the books you entrusted to a defaulting printer are being held up is all the more reason why you should make haste and write something to give another member of the craft It is a constant regret to me that I am not there either to comfort you, or, by trying to prove you in the wrong, to change the course of your thoughts and so draw you on to vent your spleen on me For you could not be angry with me for very long You know too well, my observation tells me, that friendship is not a plant that grows on every soil, especially where a gifted mind is the object of it It needs some devotion to love one whom one cannot always follow in his intellectual flights Love looks for more than admiration If Auguste is with you in the rue Cassini, tell him to write and let me know how your head is, for, if you don't mind my saying so, that head is not always sound, not always logical If these merely material vexations would only make you a little thinner! Good-bye, why can't you come here? You would be bored of course, there's no denying that, but no woes of the intellectual order would beset you here, unless you brought them with you I do not despair of becoming what is commonly called *bête* at the rate I'm going,

but—and there's a miracle for you!—without losing a grain of my intelligence It soars to regions so lofty and remote that, before very long, I shall cease to be of this world Carraud exhorts you to be patient Ivan embraces you, and I, Honoré, I implore you to give me a thought when the torments of your impatience are at their worst

*Madame Carraud had worried herself unnecessarily, for hardly had she despatched her letter of the 28th, than she received an answer to hers of the 21st Balzac reassures her about the 'accident' reported in the Revue*

[ 41 ]

Paris, 25th January, [ 1833 ]

Yes, the editor was in a quandary and he pretended I had had an accident, by way of getting out of it Juana has been giving me a lot of trouble You must have read it by this time The fact is I had been waiting, like an expectant mother, for the proper frame of mind in which to bring it forth It has made a very considerable stir I wrote it as I wrote *La Grenadière*, in a single night

Legions of troubles continue to beset me as usual, and my life is hampered by countless obligations

I cannot get away from here till after the 15th February But if you will anticipate your departure by a few days and allow me to postpone mine a little, I could come to Frapesle, whither Auguste tells me you are going very soon I am tremendously anxious to see Bourges Cathedral

Borget is now, as you doubtless know, living in the

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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rue Cassini I owe you many thanks for procuring me so good a friend He is an absolute brother to me, always showing me those delicate attentions which I adore, and I hope I shall be to him all that he is to me

Thank you for your kind letter In many ways you are right in what you say about *Faust*, but there are some poetical touches which you have not noticed We will discuss them some day After that you must read the book again and it will strike you in an entirely new light As for *Lambert*, you will soon be getting, at M Sazerac's, a little parcel containing my offering For you, there is a copy printed on *papier de Chine* which, at this moment, the greatest adepts in the art of book-binding are busy rendering worthy of you Please never lend it! You know, when you are doing your embroidery, every stitch is a thought Well, every line of this new book has been an abyss to me This is between us two Take great care of it, I will let you have an ordinary copy for lending, in case you know any people who would care to borrow it The book is now far more complete, fuller and better written I wish one day I could make my name live by it A few days later on you will be getting the second decade of the Droll Tales, and then the *Médecin de Campagne*, two works which, together with *l'Histoire Intellectuelle de Louis Lambert*, ought to make things easy for me M Nacquart has been fearing a break-down for me, seeing the terrific amount of work I've been doing I finish up with the *Revue* at the end of February After that I shan't do anything more for journalism

unless they pay me enormous fees, because newspaper work is terribly boring

I did think of adding a letter to you in *Lambert*, a sort of *envoi*, and then I thought it would be a little cheap Better let it remain something between ourselves, a secret the world knows not of Your gentle hands cannot but delight in turning the pages of this book May it charm your soul no less Good-bye then, let me have a line Am I to go to Angoulême, or to Frapesle?

Will you be so good as to ask Madame Nivet to let you have the address of M Dejean who travelled with me to Limoges, and then, as you have the account and the specification for my dinner-set, will you be so extremely kind as to ask your nephew to put it in hand at once and to send it me as soon as it is finished?

As I really must get my rooms fitted up, and as in this place I should be paying a hundred, perhaps two hundred francs for a lot of oddments, I prefer to spend double the amount and get something that is both suitable and complete.

Again good-bye It so happens that Borget has been writing you too We are putting our letters into the same envelope You will get them both together

Every kind and friendly greeting to the Major, what you will to your neighbours, and remembrances to my fair lady-love, to whom I wish unnumbered joys, the Commissioner collaborating As for you, you know whether I can write anything that's worth the millionth part of the sweet and lovely thoughts which you awaken in me

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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[ 42 ]

From la Poudrerie, 1st February, 1833

Heavens, Honoré, how extravagant you must have thought my last letter ! The fact is that Laure had really frightened me out of my life I pictured your thoughts, frozen by the chilling breath of business, tearing along in swift career, condensing and falling heavily on to the presses and reams of paper at your printers Then don't I know the swirl and restlessness of your feelings, and how prone you are to lose heart ? For, my dear, courageously as you endure the countless pin-pricks which our mortal flesh is heir to, you are no philosopher , no, it's no use shaking your head, you are no philosopher That said, it is perhaps as well for you that you are not Perhaps the philosophical habit of mind would have an injurious effect on the continual sublimation to which you subject your ideas So, then, I am really delighted that you did not so much as mention this little affair to me That proves that it counts for very little in your life, for, Honoré, I am vain enough to think that, if any really great trouble befell you, you would not hesitate to let me share it

I haven't read *Juana* yet, but I'm going to , Auguste is enthusiastic about it All the better if it [ this story ] was written straight off I shall find your ideas all the easier to assimilate

There seems to be a little uncertainty about my visit to Indre Carraud has had a little misunderstanding with my father, who cannot readily bring himself to recognise that a man of fifty has some right to do as he likes Father has not written for something like a

couple of months I don't know therefore whether I shall go to him or not But that must not make you give up the idea of coming to la Poudrerie, especially as, if you want to see the Cathedral at Bourges, you can go back through Berry, which will only add two or three miles to your journey, and, if my father comes round, we can go together I am glad to think you get on so well with Auguste He is an uncommonly nice fellow, and his mental outlook is widening every day You can rely on him more than on yourself I shall put off reading *Faust* until you are here I am afraid his poetry will be lost on me I am sure my plain common sense will never see half the beauties which fill you with such admiration I am still much more likely to prefer *Lambert* Oh, thank you very much for the copy you are so kindly going to have sent to me No, let there be no accompanying letter I know you, miles above me though you are, and that suffices As for my lending the book, make your mind quite easy on that score They won't so much as see it I have not told, and never shall tell, anyone that I have got it It shall be touched by no one but me, because it is the fruit of an idea of yours that is quite personal to myself As I think I have already told you, I give myself no airs about my relations with you, and, whatever standing they give me, I make no brag about them If some illness or other deprived you at any time of your present really marvellous intellectual fecundity, I should still be there to soothe your days (which would then be lonely) just as I now act as a refrigerator when you seem like going off in steam You are quite right to give up

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULME

joanistic work I think it's a cruel thing to have to turn out copy at fixed dates, when one values one's reputation. I have something by you in your portfolio and then sell whatever you think suitable. But this obligation to hand in a fixed quantity of copy every month must stifle a host of promising ideas.

I have written to Limoges about your china. I will get a rough estimate of the cost, and send it on to you, so that you may be prepared accordingly, although they never expect payment for three months. I did not ask for coffee-cups or a coffee-pot, but you have plenty of time to send me your orders if you want them. I impressed upon them what was needed. I hope you will be pleased.

Your lady-love, as you call her, seems a little bit at loggerheads with the neighbours. And I must tell you how and what she thinks of you, by the way, she never mentions you without colouring a little bit. One evening, Madame Rose discovered her feeding her baby with an enormous baked apple. The poor little wretch was only five days old. When she was asked why she was doing such a thing, as it might kill the child, she replied, 'They say that if you give an infant a baked apple the first Friday after it is born, it will have good luck all its life.' And on Madame Rose flinging up her hands in amazement, she added, 'Oh, I'm neither strong nor brave, but M. Balzac told me that a woman who wasn't superstitious was only half a woman and could never appeal to a man of taste.' The night before, she had told me, poor soul, that she was terrified of spiders, and when I told her

I was too, she said in her most seductive manner  
‘ Well then, listen, when you see one, say out loud,  
“ Saint Martial ! ” It will stop at once If you say it  
twice, it will turn round and go back where it came  
from ’ So there ! That’s the way they interpret you,  
my poor Honoré ! Such are the deep-rooted superstitions  
which in a soul that is beautiful by nature are the  
remains of that instinctive piety which marks the earliest  
development of human intelligence and is one of the  
richest gifts that Heaven has bestowed on us

So it’s at Angoulême that I am expecting you, and  
with no little impatience I should like you to be here  
by the 18th at the latest, the fact is that there’s to be a  
turkey, which is to be prepared for us by the foremost  
culinary artist in the district and which, seeing the  
price of it (seventy-two francs), we shall have to  
pay for out of our accumulated winnings at cards for  
the winter I must have an ordinary copy of *Louis*  
*Lambert*, but, my dear, it doesn’t seem quite right that  
it, too, should come from you

Good-bye, come soon, get away as quickly as you  
can from Paris and all its wearying distractions We  
are having some lovely days here The neighbours  
are more anxious to see you than their last reception  
would lead you to suppose The old lady [ Raison ]  
has had a black satin dress made in your honour, and  
she has been keeping her Herbault bonnet for you

Adieu, Adieu

*Balzac lies low, and never says a word Madame Carraud  
grows anxious*

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÊME

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[ 43 ] [ From la Poudrerie ] 13th February, 1833

Not a word from you, Honoré Are you not coming, then? Will Madame Raison have had her satin dress in vain? However that may be, truth compels me to confess that she is much more concerned with the *dinde aux truffes* and the turbot than she is with you, despite the admiration she professes for you This letter is not intended to press you, that would be to question your kindly feelings for me, but rather to comply with your request to be furnished with M Dejean's address I have just had it given me and I hasten to send it on to you, with these few brief lines You have waited such a long time already, that I feel I must not keep you waiting even another hour or so

I've had news of your dinner-set It is making good progress and will come to something like a hundred francs according to what the manufacturer writes me The colour is a very difficult one to manipulate, insomuch as it does not always give the same result in the baking Some pieces have to go back to the segger seven or eight times You don't say a word about the cups When you do reply, be sure and let me know what style you prefer, if you want any Auguste tells me you have been feeling the cold, and that you are very poorly and very low-spirited in consequence Come along down here, then, and I will see that the cold does not get hold of you Of cold weather we have had none, none at all Spring has begun with us Now I must give you a pleasing account of how hopes of

hearing you have suddenly germinated in Angoulême You must know that the town has produced a woman who writes and paints She usually dresses in the Greek style, rarely sits down in drawing-rooms, and is always the centre of a more or less numerous group The lady in question has bidden her friends, the members of her group, to a reading which you are giving at her house on the 16th of this month At the club dance, last Saturday, Madame Grand-Besançon was astonished to hear that you were expected so soon There are a good number of people who make out that they know you and give the most amusing portraits of you, very unlike the reality I have not had the courage to read Madame de Saint Surin, the Angoulême writer who pretends to be on such close terms of friendship with you, because I am past taking any interest in literature as such, apart from ideas However, I shall read her, if only for a quarter of an hour, for I am curious to learn whether her mind and her appearance are of a piece

Adieu, my dear, I am in a hurry. Tell me if you are coming, and when you will get here, for I must know in advance. I am going to Berry at the end of May Keep well, especially in spirits Carraud says he knows quite well how it is with you there, that if he was behind you, you would have been settled in here a long time ago, and have got through no end of work It's no good my telling Ivan that you are too great a man to think about him He insists on my sending you a kiss

I had almost forgotten the address M Dejean,  
c/o M Lacroix-Barginet, rue Ma[ y ]nigne, Limoges

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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*Ah, if Balzac had only obeyed his wishes, he would have been at la Poudrerie a long time ago!*

[ 44 ]

[ Paris, February 1833 ]

Mon Dieu, how I wish I was at la Poudrerie! But how is it to be managed! I have not got one volume of the reprint of the *Chouans* so far, I've still a dozen or thirteen pages of the *Médecin de Campagne* to finish, and I've a hundred pages to get through this month for the *Revue de Paris*. To do all that, am I not bound to stay on in Paris? Then there are the money problems, which grow more and more perplexing, because the outgoings are always the same and the receipts as incalculable as the comets! But I do really hope that by the 10th March I shall be at la Poudrerie, for I want a good month to myself to finish off this *Bataille*, which is giving me a lot of trouble. I was forgetting the second decade of the *Droll Tales* for which I've still got two more tales to do, one of them the biggest in the book.

I can tell you I've got such a number of thoughts, ideas, tasks, conceptions, inter-crossing, seething and sputtering in my head that I am nearly mad with it all. Nevertheless, nothing brings my weight down, and I am 'the veriest portrait of a monk that has ever been seen since monasteries existed'.

As to my spirits, I am profoundly dejected. Work is the only thing that keeps me going. Is there then no wife for me in the world? My fits of mental and physical depression become more frequent and last longer. And then to come from these overwhelming tasks to

nothing and no one, not to have that gentle and caressing feminine presence at hand which has been the object of all my toil.

But enough of this I owe you my thanks both for the trouble you are taking over my dinner-service and for all the kind things you say. Your letters always affect me like some beautiful flower whose perfume is a delight

I know nothing whatever about Madame Surin, any more than I do about numerous other women whose favours I am supposed to have enjoyed and whose names and faces, though they boast of having me for their lover, are completely unknown to me. I have seen no one from Angoulême and I know no one there but you, and the people I have met at your house

Next week we are sending you your *Lambert*. You would have had it already had M. Auguste not been so dilatory. He forgot to order the box. I am sending with it an ordinary copy for you to do as you like with

We have eaten your pie with respectful reverence, thinking of you necessarily, but very eagerly and cordially withal, as you may imagine

Come now, a few more days and I shall come to you armed with one of the handsomest books ever fashioned by the hands of man, if my own presentations and those of my friends are to be relied on, if my good judgment does not fail me, in a word, if all the 'ifs' are realised

*Le Médecin de Campagne* is giving me ten times as much trouble as *Lambert* did. Not a sentence, not an idea but has had to be revised and corrected over and

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULEME

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over again, it's dreadful But when you are trying to achieve the beautiful simplicity of the Gospel, to surpass *The Vicar of Wakefield* and to show the *Imitation of Christ* in action you've got to work, and work hard Emile de Girardin and good old Borget bet it will run to four hundred thousand copies Emile is going to bring it out at tenpence a copy, like an almanac, and it ought to be put on sale like a prayer book

Good-bye, then, for the present It's not my fault I have to put off coming, you can't have any doubts about my affection for you, and Yvan is quite right We often talk about him, Auguste and I

Good-bye again A heartful of love, unnumbered greetings, nay, my heart itself Kiss Yvan on the brow for me And all best wishes to the Major

Hurry them up with my dinner service, I've got to give a dinner-party and I don't know, at the moment, exactly when it will have to be As regards the cups I should like them to be po-shaped (forgive me, but it explains exactly what I mean), elegant and plain It's a shape that will never go out of fashion The dessert-plates, you know, should be a little more ornamental than the others Herewith is my monogram to send on to them, with a single 'B,' also Gothic, in addition

*Mme Carraud carefully notes these instructions and writes*

[ 45 ] [ From la Poudrerie ] 1st [ March 1833 ]

The 10th March is nearly here, Honoré, and I'm very much afraid it won't see us together I quite under-

stand about the business and the attractions that keep you in Paris I don't know whether I told you that vases like mine won't stand the heat required for gilding I decided to make you another present instead, and I've ordered a tea-set like my own It was sent off and you should have got it by this time But will it really be what I intended it to be? That you alone will be able to tell me when you see the specimen-cup that I've got here. That being the case, I have put off ordering your coffee-cups for the present To begin with, you do not tell me how many you want, nor do you say anything about the size of the coffee-pot, sugar-basin, etc., size being indicated by the number of cupfuls it should hold Perhaps what I have sent you will do instead of what you had in mind I shall await your further orders, therefore, and be sure and give exact particulars about everything

With regard to the dessert-plates I should not feel at all comfortable about adding anything else Anything of the kind would spoil the good taste of the thing There would just be a wreath round the bottom, which would be very common and detract from the delightful simplicity of the whole You could even sprinkle the bottom with little spots, decreasing in size as they approach the centre from the circumference That is what would be the best thing, yet even that is not as good as plainness Here is another reason: all your plates, like mine, are of the size known as dessert, because big plates are no longer in accord with the present manner of serving, in which things are offered separately. If then you feel you really must

have ornamental plates, let me know The manufacturer writes to tell me that you will get your service in ten days' time I would have those two dozen plates sent on separately, and there would thus be no delay Write and let me know about the cups and the plates Observe that the tureens and fruit-dishes are only decorated like the rest of the service Your monogram was duly sent It is the same as your seal—the two letters I hope it will prove to have been faithfully copied

Auguste speaks of the *Médecin de Campagne* as being a wonderful book I am very anxious to have it I'm also looking out for *Louis Lambert* I am longing for it *Madame Diard* delighted me immensely, all the same I've picked out two erroneous ideas In one you elevate into a principle the necessity for different social grades, classify the human species according to the chances of birth and condemn to bitter servitude, to degrading helotry people with an outlook as broad and talents as great as your own, perhaps In all that, I saw a sop to your party, and I heaved a doleful sigh Said I to myself, 'Suppose Honoré had been a cobbler's son and condemned to make boots all his life, despite the creative fire he felt surging within him!' The other error comes into the philosophic category You have no right to say that, given the same latitude, an islander is far superior to a dweller on the mainland Your example won't hold water, because Napoleon got his first ideas and early education on the Continent He employed very few Corsicans You stultify your own argument Moreover, Napoleon is an exception and cannot be taken as proving anything,

except the immense power of a man who always has his will concentrated on one thing Ah, if only he were a child now, what a destiny would await the France of 1850 ! For he would be the product of his age, and we have no need now of battles to prove our superiority ! And his will-power, applied to the service of the public weal, as we conceive it to-day, would substitute healthy growth for all this gangrene which for ten years at least has been sapping our vitals *La Bataille ! La Bataille !* You are counting on this book to consolidate a reputation which is becoming more firmly established every day, but which as yet falls a little on the hither side of fame *La Bataille*, I take it, is a work of some dimensions And *Les Trois Cardinaux* I seem to have heard something of the plan of that book Have you given it up ? Alas—I tell you frankly—I don't rely on you any more !

Auguste says you contemplate a visit to Fraplesle, but, Honoré, although you would be warmly welcomed there, you little know the ramshackle state of my father's house and the obstinacy with which his old domestics cling to their time-honoured way of doing things To begin with, although through all his eighty-two years he has achieved the golden mean, he has no idea of liberty, only of equality He loathes the Bourbons They are like a red rag to a bull My father dates back to 1751, he is a plain man of the soil, and the arrogance of the aristocracy is always a thorn in his flesh He adored the Emperor because he, my father, is an autocrat, a fine noble looking old man in his green old age, and also because Napoleon did establish real, genuine

equality He was a violent opponent of the Restoration, Louis Philippe he likes, because he no longer has the strength to oppose things and because he would rather make believe that we have got what we want than enquire whether such a belief was really justified He will therefore never understand how a man of your stamp could bring himself to be led by the Royalists, nor would he readily conceive how you could descend to be their leader But if you would have spring flowers, and a profusion of them, a little bit of ground which chance has turned into an English garden, so that scarcely a touch is needed to make it a haunt of all delight, limpid streams on every hand and healthy looks, then come to Frapesle The house is a monument of filial respect, Carraud and I have sacrificed order, and even convenience, to my father's whims Furniture and adornments alike are lacking, and yet it is a very pleasant place So nothing keeps your weight down, my poor Honoré! Just imagine, with your build, what you would have been like if you had never kept your mind at work It doesn't bear thinking about How is it I can never hope to have a little of your *embonpoint* I could do with it I need it now that my fortieth year will soon be upon me But alas, a single day is more of a trial to my weakly constitution than the travail of your mightiest creations is to you

The fact is, dear friend, you know nought of those tumults that lay waste the deeps of ocean, though not a single ripple on the surface tells of their hidden might And then, mark you, this lonely, rather dreamy life

makes one intensely susceptible I am sensitive to everything Nowadays, nothing leaves me cold or indifferent I very seldom feel up in the skies However, you must not run away with the idea that I deplore this sensitivity to the lightest passing shadow On the contrary, I look on it as something to be thankful for that I am not reduced to complete stupidity

Heavens, what a thankless being you are! You are always complaining about having no woman to love you, when the best years of your life were adorned by the noblest and the most unselfish of women<sup>1</sup> Cast your eyes around you, and find three men favoured as you have been<sup>1</sup> There is a woman for you in the world, but not in that part of it where you are seeking her To begin with, dear friend, seeing how old you are and what your life has been, there's only one thing to make you really happy and that is a lawful wife No matter who the woman that gives herself to you, she will prove but a faint image of her you loved so dearly, because, quite apart from the latter's merits, you loved her with all the ardour of your twenty years But come, tell me, could you, a public man, spend whole nights in a wardrobe, stop there for days on end in the expectation of an hour's pleasure? No, the woman must come to you, now, and when she comes you will think nothing of her, for a woman, even when she resolves to take the plunge, should still retain some show of modesty The woman that is really yours, for whom you will ask when you are tired in spirit and crave for a devoted bosom on which to lay your

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Berry

every head who, inspired by you, will follow with ardour your swift and soaring flight, ready to soothe you with a kiss when, abandoning the heights, you come back to harsh reality, who will not be daunted by your dreams of high ambition, certain of being always with you, always by your side, for whom the future will be always fair, because she will be always yours, because indifference, contempt, remorse can neveradden her declining years—that woman, I say, and she alone, is the one to make you happy

My dear, dear friend, your heart has remained pure, I nearly said in spite of yourself, for you are one of those who, in evil company, are ashamed of being good Such a heart as that calls for a love that is both true and deep and even if you only had, your wife and you, that feeling of partnership which fills to the lot of even ordinary families, it would still suffice to satisfy the yearning which torments you, so that sometimes it nearly makes you mad If you were always with plain, sober-minded people like us, how much more happy you would be, even if your writings lost a little of their glow and colour Anyhow, come here or to Frapesle Here, I will take you with me everywhere I will make you acquainted with my good-looking cousin She's a statue that needs bringing to life, quite country-bred, plenty of money but, it may be, obliged to stay in the country for at least nine months If money is all you want, there it is As for the *feu sacré*, has she got it or hasn't she? That is still in doubt And now let me caution you a little about Émile de Girardin and his people He himself is a speculator, and people like

that would sacrifice their child She is hard I know it from several things I've had told me If you can do without him, do If not, tread warily, and, whatever you do, don't go begging a preface from anyone<sup>1</sup> You are you, and lonely you will always be, wherever you are You will never find a school or become the centre of a group

Professional *littérateurs* won't understand you as well as the common run You put too much soul into your writings For them the *Contes Drolatiques*, the finest flowers of wit that ever were, for the many, *L'Aubeige Rouge* and the poor, condemned criminal, dreaming of his mother It's like the difference between a popular melody and music for connoisseurs

But good-bye I am in for a day of feverishness to-morrow, I feel worn out The sun isn't shining any more

Ivan bounces familiarly on your round knees, as if you were just any ordinary person Carraud has his argumentative battery ready Come along then, I would rather have you here than at Frapesc

*But Balzac is chained to his task and writes as follows*

[ 46 ] Paris, between the 7th and 17th March 1833

I don't know whether to thank you or to scold you I will do both

The rug has come It makes my room look royal

<sup>1</sup> Balzac had asked Delphine de Girardin for a preface to a collection of *Studies of Women* which he contemplated writing (*Correspondance*, 1, 169)

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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But knowing you, how I shall value it! I have had the tea-set. It is graceful and pretty, and admired by everyone, for it is seen, though I should like to be the only one to see it. We are very happy, both of us, you in giving me something that has pleased me, and I in having it from you.

Mon Dieu, what a debt I owe you for all the trouble you have taken about my china. Arrange things as you think fit, for I've forgotten everything about it now.

I must tell you that I am up to my eyes in work. The machinery of my life is quite altered. I go to bed at six or seven in the evening, like the hens. I am called at one a.m. and work until eight. At eight I go to sleep again for an hour and a half, then I have something very light, 1 cup of pure coffee, and harness myself to my cab until four. At four I receive visitors, have a bath, or go out. After dinner I go to bed. I shall have to live like that for some months, if I'm not to be snowed under with the things I've got to do.

Profits come in slowly, the outgoings are fixed and inexorable. I am now certain of making a lot of money. I shall have to wait a bit longer and work for three years. Everything has to be gone over, corrected again and again, a colossal business. It's a thankless job, no money, no immediate return.

I want my freedom, my moral and pecuniary independence. To this end I sacrifice social life without the least regret. The only thing is, it delays my coming to see you, and that makes me grieve. But one thing is certain and that is that, once I've got through this

work. I shall need absolute rest: and I shall seek it at Angoulême, or in Berry, at any rate in some country spot. I shall perhaps go and take the waters at Aix, *on my own account*. Before doing that, I am waiting to hear what M<sup>e</sup> Nacquart says.

But as I shall have to rest like a fox in his lair, I must thank you again for pandering to my precious fantasies and my craze for having elegant and pretty things about me. What poetry there is in you and what good sense, two things, one would think, that wouldn't go together! As for the two points you raise about *Juana*, the one is, to my mind, indisputable, there's no getting away from it. As for the other, we both really say the same thing. Of people in the same latitude the islander is superior to the dweller on the mainland. The fact that Napoleon was brought up in France does not detract from his insular cast of mind.

*Mon Dieu*, we are driving the Paris workmen nearly off their heads, and all about a very simple thing and that is the box to pack your *Lov's Lov* in. However, it will, I hope, be ready by next Thursday, and you will have it by Sunday, the 17th, if the diligence puts the pace on.

There are still a number of faults in the *Lov's Lov* which you will have there. The fewest imperfections will be found in the next forthcoming edition. What trouble the work has involved! It's frightful! It's the same for *La Peau de Chagrin*. I hope the next edition will be as perfect as any human thing can be.

Hard work and planning and plotting my various novels of fiction have entirely engrossed me. I work too hard

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÊME

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and am too much worried, to think about the sort of troubles which slumber and burrow in the heart It may be I shall cure myself of my ideas about women, and that I shall do without the things I asked of them If you only knew what *Le Médecin de Campagne* is like, and the amount of work I have had to put into it, not to mention what I've had to put up with from the publisher, who goads me as you might goad an ox !

Good-bye Excuse this short letter You will imagine all that I have left unsaid , but what you will never know is how greatly I deplore not being at la Poudrerie, passing my days in quiet with you beside me I long for that so greatly that I would not swear that I might not manage to be there in April Adieu All good wishes to M Caraud Remember me to your neighbours and, if you think fit, to the lady who has at length added a few more inches to her lodging Good-bye Would I could add 'To-morrow, we shall be lunching together '

*But Mme Carraud will not hear of Honoré's coming if his work is to suffer, and so she writes*

[ 47 ]

la Poudrerie, 30th March, 1833

Greatly as I look forward to your coming, Honoré dear, I should never forgive myself if your interests were to suffer Stay on in Paris then, so long as they require you to, and think of your journey only as a good work which may indeed be put off, but which it will always be good and pleasant to perform, however long it is deferred You help me to bring myself to

look on riches as an important element of real happiness You have so warped your straightforward nature that I imagine you could not be happy without social position And you are so constantly thinking about it that you have at last come to believe that money, and lots of it, is necessary, if you are to achieve that end This is very modest of you, my dear, you who, so to speak, were born with this social superiority And as everyone must needs be happy in his own way, I hope you'll have gold in shovelfuls, sorry as I am not to be able to contribute to this immense well-being, or to save you from the besotting consequences which will result from the attainment of your end Do not put yourself to a lot of trouble about getting *Lambert*, the perfected *Lambert*, down here to Angoulême My eager desire to read it hardly compensates for the distractions which that sort of preoccupation involves you in

Am I not one of those who, like you, regard a thing as done in the mind, before it is accomplished in fact? And do I not know that you had me in your mind when you were so carefully revising *Louis Lambert*, and that you took joy in the pride I should feel as I read it? Let your craftsmen labour unmolested on the casket that shall be worthy of your *Lambert*, and you too, work on in peace I should have written you several days ago had not some indefinable *malaise* taken hold of me I only live when there is sun In the sun I revive like a hothouse plant But the moment I get indoors I droop again and feel fit for nothing All the energy that remains to me, I spend on Ivan Everything pales

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULEMÉ

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away into nothingness compared with that, and I am sorry at seeing so little of my friends, who, alas, all live at a distance I hope things won't always be like this, and that I shall be feeling in good spirits when you come If Frapesle is the place, I am always well there *Lambert* is a vast and illimitable work At every stage of your life you will feel impelled to work on it again, for don't imagine that old age takes everything away For thirty years to come you'll be adding this, and deleting that A galley-slave? That you'll always be, and your tenfold life will wear itself out in longing You will play the part of Tantalus so long as you live The marvel is that you have kept your heart clean and your ideals untarnished But to be bondsman of the mind, of oneself, is better than being the slave of fashion, or of authority Isn't it a fact that Auguste knows what friendship is, and never fails in it? He is in truth the man that I portrayed to you, he knows what is lovable in you, if anyone does Like me he disregards your fascinating intellectual gifts, and concentrates on something better still And so he and I would still hedge you round with all our tender care, even though some lesion of the mind had laid you low It is more than loving unto death There is something sad and sweet in mourning for a loved one, a sort of worldly heroism in talking often of such an one But to love one who has become as a brute beast<sup>1</sup> I can understand the feelings of Mlle de Villenoix<sup>11</sup> I told you that Borget was not capable of enthusiasm the reason was he did not know

<sup>1</sup> Who gives up her life to Louis Lambert when his mind is gone

you then Now, he grows eloquent when he mentions your name, and you it is who have initiated him into that sublime state of mind which brings us nearest to the divine nature He thinks more about you than he does about his art He has talked to me so much about the *Médecin de Campagne* that he has left me nothing to find out for myself But what matter, if my impressions rise to the height of his? Oh, yes, it is something to know that one is loved, especially when, all around me, life is like a desert! Ever since I've been here, I've been much more conscious of the mutual attachment that prevails in my household, and I am the happier for it You won't get the dish-cover for your dinner-set till a little later, together with some cups They tell me it is charming. I hope it will come up to your ideas, for, my dear, everything is made insipid to you by the fact that, your imagination being so rich and so potent, reality can never match a single one of its creations

And so I appreciate all the touching kindness in your finding my rug worthy of you I was working it for *you*, that's where my real merit lies Mon Dieu, why do you go on using yourself up like this? We can't be always in the thirties, Honoré Now, look you, I too played fast and loose with my health, without however, being able to excuse my late hours with such results as justify yours I had almost arrived at the point of denying the existence of pain, at the very moment that it had me most powerfully in its grip Now, I am paying for my extravagance, and, as I am not alone in the world, as my life is a capital sum divided up into several holdings and should not be extinguished

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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till it has doubled itself, I am grieved to see my strength abating You will not always be single The day will come when you will be 'a cause' in your turn, so don't use yourself up before your time Adieu! You see I can write now without things entering into me too deeply for my peace of mind I have to take everything in small doses, even the only real pleasure that I have, namely, communing with my friends, marrying my thoughts with theirs Affection is the sole thing that I can bear, and that I can bear, though it weigh as much as thirty atmospheres, for that, I have the strength of the mighty, and a soul that can sympathise with all Madame Rose is not at all well She is simply longing to see you, which is rather odd, in view of the reception she gave me last year And Auguste, is he coming to see me? I do not expect to see you again for a long time, but I embrace you cordially, as a real friend, if you will excuse the vanity of the expression Carraud exhorts you with all his heart, to be of good cheer I love you well and truly

ZULMA

*Auguste Borget is prompter with his answer than Balzac He turns up at the Carrauds' during the first week in April, bringing the very latest news of his friend Honoré He also brings the famous Louis Lambert and the boy to keep it in Madame Carraud is delighted and writes off to thank Balzac*

[ 48 ]

[ la Poudrerie ] 8th April [ 1833 ]

Auguste is here and has given me the liveliest account of you For a moment I almost seemed to see you behind

him And even now, when he is here in front of me colouring a sketch of your room, I still keep turning round, expecting to see you And *Louis Lambert*<sup>1</sup> I've got it, I've read it, I've gloated over it A few slips have escaped you, but no doubt you have spotted them at the first reading Only one, rather an important one, does not seem to have been noticed by anyone and so I draw your attention to it Being more jealous for your reputation than if it were my own, it is possible that I have been a little hypersensitive in my scrutiny

The passage. ‘Frequently I have made some delightful journeys’ seems to conflict with the idea expressed farther on, ‘there is nothing absolute about words’ The first proposition, though admitting numerous exceptions, due to climatic influences and to the varying effect on sounds of atmospheric rarefaction, seems much truer than the second The latter can perhaps be explained as a qualifying or correcting sentence, but not so absolutely as you put it Moreover, it ought to be put in juxtaposition to the other and not be allowed to figure as an isolated thesis, independent of it Think that out carefully in view of your next edition’

I have read several philological books, and that is a subject that would have an immense attraction for me if I were in a position to follow it up, if my feminine garb did not compel me to follow different occupations Like your Louis, I love to trace the successive changes

<sup>1</sup> Balzac paid no heed to Madame Carraud’s criticisms Cf *Louis Lambert*, Gosselin, 1832 (p 184) and Furne’s edition, 1846 (vol xvi, pp 111 and 121)

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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in a word You go back to its source, following up the modifications in a single letter according to latitude or the addition of another one, which hundreds of years afterwards will supply scholars with their only clue to the identity or kinship of two given expressions Oh yes, there is no doubt that words exert an influence upon us It is almost an education, the exquisite politeness, the almost fluid delicacy of the higher classes, which would constitute the everlasting despair of those who possess them not, were they not incompatible with all real energy and depth of feeling Their influence is wholly due to the effect of words upon us The reaction is much less strong, it consists only in the change of pronunciation, or a new application, or the extension of a word's given meaning, but, even so, the word which we create, so to speak, acts profoundly upon us and gives rise to a new development of ideas which, in its turn, gives rise to others Am I really daring to speak to you like this, I who only know my language by instinct and have never really worked at it! But with you I am quite at home, because what you like in me are the things I have thought out for myself, my own personal ideas and not the things, such as they are, which I may have got from my provincial education

Then again, a hundred eyes see better than one, and yet again, it is right for you to know what strikes me because, I repeat, I am just one of the common run of readers, and what gives me pause would do the same for them

But enough of this, although I stick to what I have said, let me tell you that *Louis Lambert* has given some

delicious heart-thrills to the lady next door, and that poor Madame Séguin, chancing to call on her that day, was most cruelly triumphed over. I was not there, and I'm glad I wasn't I don't like spitefulness The pretty box adorns my bedroom, and no profane hand shall touch it

Do you know I've got a gymnasium? O Honoré! Come and see it You will live a healthy life in every way down here. I promise you six hours of perfect lucidity a day, on *one cup of coffee!* And see to it, my friend, that you don't work more than that, because your constitution makes urgent demands on you which cannot be disobeyed And six hours' good, useful work a day, with none of those fits of lassitude you find so depressing, would achieve wonders. Come, Honoré, and if you put yourself with confidence into our hands you can promise untold marvels to your bullying publishers

Adieu. writing is an agonising thing to me Forgive me if I am incomprehensible, you have brain enough for two Carraud wants you here Auguste and I feel the need of you to put the coping stone on life Adieu

ZULMA

At last Balzac makes up his mind to interrupt his toil, and, about the middle of April, alights at la Poudrerie, where he was to stay for more than a month No doubt he was invited to one of those provincial gatherings which he has so admirably described at the beginning of his Illusions Perdues, and of which apparently Madame de Saint Surin was the shining light That noble dame was thirty-three

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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years of age She was at that time cultivating the Romantic Muse In 1827 she had brought out *Le Bal des Élections*, which was followed, in 1830, by the *Miroir des Dames, Scènes du Monde* Quite recently she had treated her fellow-countrywomen to a work entitled *Isabelle de Taillefer, Comtesse d'Angoulême, reine d'Angleterre* Her husband, head of the *École Centrale d'Angoulême*, was responsible for a more modest contribution to the family fame with *Glycère*, an idyll, which had been published locally in the Year III In 1840 he was destined to add a further jewel to his crown with a *Petit Mémoire contre de Longues Vexations*, and by so doing to give the secrets of an unhappy matrimonial experience to the world Bidding adieu to the salon of the aforesaid shrewish Muse, Balzac went wandering at his ease along the streets of Angoulême, ordering at Grotot's cook shop a tip-top pie for his good friend Pixérécourt, stopping to gaze at the shop-sign of Evangelista, the chemist, hob-nobbing in the middle of the road with the poor day-labourer Séchart, son of the Séchart who was popularly known as Chardon sec, or Dry Thistle, and drinking in with eyes and ears everything he saw and heard At the end of May, Balzac leaves la Poudrerie and goes back to Paris, while Madame Carraud, accompanied by Ivan and Borget, goes off to visit her sister, Madame Nivet, at Limoges Yet once again the china dinner-service comes upon the stage On the 21st May, first Borget, then Mme Carraud writes to Balzac

[ 49 ]

[ Limoges, the 21st May 1833 ]

My dear Honoré, after two days' travelling, your three friends arrived at Limoges Madame Nivet has

had a return of her complaint and cannot come on with us, so Madame Carraud has made up her mind to stay on with her a few days longer. Add to this her solicitude for the health of her dear son, and her desire to escape the annual fête at Frapesle,<sup>1</sup> a terribly boring affair, got up by her father, and you will understand why we have decided to stay on a little longer at Limoges. Don't worry in the least about your china. No need to go cudgelling your brains about scraping up the necessary to meet the manufacturer's draft. We have seen M. Nivet this morning and he desires that you yourself should fix your own date, when you can and wish to pay. Write to Messrs Marchal, Nivet and Belut and tell them what you intend doing in the matter. And let them know the dimensions of the two broken pieces. You will get all that with the toilet-set we have ordered for you.

We shan't be in Berry till Tuesday or Wednesday next week.

Adieu, don't forget me if you're short of money. I am yours, body, soul and purse AUGUSTE BORGET

Auguste has doubtless told you, my dear Honoré, that we have seen about the things you wanted here, but I am sure he said nothing about how poorly he was on the journey. Several considerations have combined to make me stay on here longer than I originally intended, and the need for rest has been one of the most compelling. My poor boy has another of his feverish attacks. However, at the rate it's going, I

<sup>1</sup> Whit-Monday at Tivoli, near Frapesle

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULEME

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think he will be free of it before I start A doctor they think a lot of here strongly advises me to take him to Vichy I'm going to see what Carraud says, and shall decide when I hear from him And you, friend, what sort of a reception has Paris been giving you? You can't imagine how you fare at the hands of provincial mediocrity, whether they belaud or belittle you But Paris has something good and true to offer you in the way of affection 'Tis a hothouse plant, whom you treat too much like a woodland flower A friend, Honoré!<sup>1</sup> And a woman that hasn't her equal!

Tell her, if she ever wants to know anything about me, that I love and admire her with all my heart, that I love her with all the bliss she pours forth on you, as lavishly as the sky sends down its rain To water a single plant, it drenches a whole region Whatever my ideas of you, I do not think you are made to absorb more than a certain given amount of happiness, and she, the angel, is continually shedding it around But stay, I am silent, for you always cry out when you are in the wrong, and then you abuse those gifts of expression with which heaven has endowed you I found my sister very poorly I was frightened to see her so much changed Sunday morning I am off to revel in my flowers at Frapesle, and if you are still itching to see the Cathedral which ennobles our ancient Berry, I will await you like the friend you know I am, and you will have a motive the more for your journey, the certainty of giving some hours of the kind that fade not from the memory

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Berny

Adieu, try to keep well and to keep on writing, so that all the little curs may stop their yapping I have heard people here speak disparagingly of those who, according to the things I hear said against them, must be born artists Poor wretches, to live in the provinces and be compelled to rub shoulders with all and sundry in order to secure one's material needs'

Adieu Keep your spirits up

Z

Ivan says you must excuse the scrawl he has made on Auguste's letter

*Balzac's stay at la Poudrière made a new man of him  
No sooner was he back in Paris than he writes to tell Madame Carraud of a wonderful thing. As if by magic, he has begun work again on the grand scale, sixteen hours a day, and the greatest fund of courage and inspiration that he ever had*

[ 50 ]

Paris 25th May 1833

'A thousand thanks, my dear Auguste!' I charge you, Madame, say those words to Borget with all the depth of tone you know so well how to instill into things of the heart I knew very well that you would write to me on your journey, you and that dear Ivan, for your heart tells you how everything that is *you* is precious to me, and dear Yes, indeed it is very likely that I shall go and see you in Berry As if by magic I have started work again on the grand scale, sixteen hours a day, and a greater fund of courage and inspiration than I ever had before

The *Médecin de Campagne* is finished You will get

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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it at Issoudun with the second decade of the *Drolatiques* at the beginning of next month I've only got another week of proof correcting Have no fear According to her whom you so justly call an angel, the end is finer than the beginning The effect increases as the work proceeds, a thing I was still a little doubtful about

I still get these attacks of colic, and now they tell me influenza is coming

It seems to me that Vichy and its waters would do your dear child a lot of good, but wait and see how he gets on at Frapescle In any case you might try galvanic treatment My sister was cured of the same thing that Madame Nivet is suffering from by galvanism applied for two hours every day merely by my mother That is a fact and there's no getting away from it So try it on Ivan

I did not say good-bye to you, or to the Major, because I didn't want to wake you, but I was sorry not to be able to give you the cordial, very sincere, but somewhat tristful kiss of farewell As soon as I've finished the manuscript of *le Privilège*, I shall go and visit Bourges Alas, Madame de B[erny] needs a month's peace, tranquillity and fresh air, for she is not herself, not well, and when things are like that, no more work for me, I devote myself entirely to looking after her I don't know where to go, but on the 15th or the 20th June, I shall take her away somewhere

I will write to the Limoges gentlemen

Well then, good-bye You are among the three people to whom I write, but I cannot write at length because of the proofs and the work I've got to get

through *Le succube*<sup>1</sup> is said to be immense, sublime, gigantic I am glad that people say the second decade is going to be a success Once more good-bye Write when you get to Frapesle, and during your stay there I shall come and see you there were it only, all ties of affection apart, to imbue myself afresh with the patriarchal atmosphere. But besides that, I shall come to win a glance from you, as one of my dearest rewards for that *Médecin de Campagne* whereof some of the pages owe their inspiration to you.

Good-bye Love and gratitude

HONORÉ

I send this to Issoudun, since you are leaving Limoges to-morrow, Saturday, 26th

*Towards the beginning of July, Balzac, still overwhelmed with work, writes thus*

[ 51 ] [ Paris, sometime before the 9th July, 1833 ]

*Ma foi*, the Oriental Tale is not in my line at all It pains me to imagine what Auguste will think of it

I write you in haste

Just imagine, I have been summoned to appear before the Tribunal de Commerce. I have declined on the ground that I do not come within its jurisdiction<sup>2</sup> Mame wants everything out of me at once

I am working day and night The *Médecin de Campagne* is finished The proceeds of the second volume,

<sup>1</sup> One of the *Comédies Drolatiques*

<sup>2</sup> Mame therefore again applied to the Tribunal Civil and on the 9th July was granted a summons against Balzac

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULEMÈ

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I get *Les Chouans* has been corrected and the fact will be notified to him by an officer of the court

My lawyer tells me I am bound to win my case, because everything is in order on my side It would take too long to tell you the details of this tiresome affair It's running me into three thousand francs, which I've got to make up somehow Fortunately the third decade of the *Drolatiques* is finished and, with *le Privilège* thrown in, it will make up for everything But all this work is enough to drive you off your head The proofs of *Le Médecin* will still take up five or six more days and nights The second decade is out, but Gosselin has not sent me any copies yet I shall send yours to Angoulême

I am going to write to-morrow to M Nivet about the things I need and about my toilet-set

Are you still unwell, that I haven't had a line from you? If so, what are you going to do about getting back to Angoulême?

I can't write any more now They've just brought me three 'signatures' of *Le Médecin*, which have to be read straight off, and besides these, I've got to get through the galleys of the last part

Good-bye, all my love, and mind you give Auguste a good hand-shake for me Smargiassi<sup>1</sup> says I am to tell him that there's too much Gudin<sup>2</sup> about his work, and three times he said to me, 'Nature! Nature! Nature!' That's what the worthy Smargiassi thinks

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Smargiassi, landscape painter, who had exhibited views of Pozzolli and Capri

<sup>2</sup> Baron Théodore Gudin, a famous seascape artist

## BALZAC AND MADAME CARRAUD

I showed him the few studies that were hung up in Auguste's room and he liked them.

I hope I shall have time to run down to the Pyrenees when I've got through my work, so that I may look you up for a day or two at la Poudrière, by which time you will have read the *Médecin de Campagne*, for my lawyer is going to obtain an order from the judge to the effect that publication shall take place before any order as to money is made.

You tell me nothing about your health. If you cannot write, who's going to let me know about you when Auguste has gone?

All kind greetings to Major 'Piston.' But I'm in range of a more powerful piston here and really, I shall need a good month's rest in September. I am sorry I can't tell you a hundredth part of the things I want to tell you. As to what I feel for you, you know that already.

*July comes to an end, and there is still no word from Madame Carraud. Balzac begins to get anxious.*

[ 52 ]

[ Paris, end of July 1833 ]

I've no news of you, and I'm worried. I found it impossible to write you and send you my Third 'Decade' to Angoulême where, I take it, you are. Please, if you love me, send me just a couple of words about yourselves, if you are too tired, or not well enough to write a proper letter.

*Le Médecin de Campagne* is finished. In a week's time you shall have a copy, if that is possible, for it is going

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÊME

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to be sold by a bookseller under instructions from the court by whom the case concerning it has been tried

Meanwhile I am being robbed and pillaged on every hand *La vie de Napoléon racontée dans une grange par un soldat à des paysans* has been treated as a money-making speculation Here are twenty thousand copies sold, to my detriment, by people who have not so much as mentioned my name or indicated the authorship of the book To bring an action against them for damages would be to soil one's hands But in the meantime I'm being ruined Never in my life have I been so worried and anxious I made a tremendous effort to finish this book, and now its career has been pulled up short by an ignoble legal wrangle in which my precious time is thrown away

And there's never a word from you, you who have the power to console me And Borget hasn't written either

Well, I must say good-bye I've hardly time to write even these few lines They will tell you that I am faithful to my friendships, that you often occupy my thoughts, that the desire of pleasing a mind so choice as your own has sustained me in my work, and that when you read *Le Médecin* you will know why I have kept silent for some days You will divine some of the tears shed by the writer, who loves you, and you will realise the number of studious nights and hours expended on a book which has taken away something of my life and, maybe, made too great an inroad on my feelings

I am going to start my third lot of Droll Tales, which means a frightful lot of work, and then finish up my novel *Le Privilège*.

Good-bye once more Remember me to the Major, and be sure that you always fill in the writer's heart the place you would like to fill I should very much like to have some news of you

Didn't I hear recently that your nephew, Bucheron, had been giving out that he knew me intimately and that he, too, was joining in the attacks on me, just as if he were a journalist. And the only time I ever saw him was in the street, at Tours ! It looks as if the whole province were joining in. Good-bye, take care of yourself, think of those who love you and accept all the tender greetings I send you here Ah, how much I should enjoy another month of quiet at Angoulême ! But I could not come without the *Dilecta* whom, unluckily for you, you do not know

From the 8th August till the 8th September, I shall be in the little summer retreat at Nemours, putting in some quiet, leisurely work

Farewell, you, from whom it is hard to tear oneself away

Let me know how Ivan gets on

*The Dilecta, who had no great fondness for Balzac's other women-friends, particularly Madame d'Abrantès and Madame de Castries, realised how pure were the sentiments of affection that united Balzac and Madame Carraud. She was not in the least jealous and even encouraged her. These two noble-minded women had always been anxious*

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*to know each other and Madame Carraud eagerly embraced the idea of welcoming Madame de Berny to la Poudrerie*

[ 53 ]

la Poudrerie, 2nd August, 1833

Yes, it is certainly unfortunate for me that I am not acquainted with the angelic woman who watches over you. Otherwise, should I still be offering her the unexciting, but very cordial hospitality of la Poudrerie? If only some acceptable opportunity had offered itself, should I not have tried to make known to her how eager was my desire to gain her friendship?

I have received your Contes and my acknowledgment would have preceded your letter, had I not been beset by a succession of annoying indispositions, to say nothing of the inspection. It is still painful for me to write, but at any rate I am writing, and you must be among the first to know it. Your Tales are very fine, but in my opinion there is nothing—nay, I will go further and say there never will be anything—in this manner to equal *Le Péché Vesmel*. There is a glow of chastity in that revelation of love's mysteries which you doubtless owe to some inspiration of the good angel. Nothing could surpass the *Péché Vesmel*. You may well be proud of those pages. It is but once in a lifetime that one writes such things. The rest of the book is, perhaps, better than the first set of tales, but I won't say definitely, I am not sure enough of my own taste to give a downright opinion. I have been greatly upset over this wretched lawsuit about the *Médecin de Campagne*. I would have given anything in the world for you to have renounced your rights.

My poor Honoré, you are so compassed about with envy and calumny that you never ought to have recourse to the law except in thought. You should never appear in the flesh, no matter how much money you stand to lose. You don't let the consoling angel influence you enough. I am certain I share her feelings in this matter. I abominate those legal affairs as much as if I were your wife. When I hear them spoken about, liberally embroidered by the tongues of fools in the course of their journey from Paris to the heart of the provinces, I blush and feel embarrassed, as though I myself were to blame. Give up your stupid apartment with all its luxuries. That is what is at the root of all these troubles. Think you, Honoré, that behind the yellow curtains of la Poudrerie there are not as many generous and noble impulses, as behind your silken hangings? To rob you is horrible enough, and then to want to bring you into court! For God's sake let them take what they will of you, but don't seek redress from salaried justice. Won't the public see that you get your due sooner or later? Who could fail to identify your creations and your style?

What I cannot understand is how this pilfering could have been effected unless your printer or your bookseller was in the plot. And if they are, they're in your hands; don't employ them any more. Money's at the bottom of it all. Don't soil your hands with it. As for renown, you'll always be sure of that. Your touch is too individual, too much your own, for anyone to come near you. No doubt they are robbing you, and you need money. But is there not something more

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vital still, and still intact Honoré, have nothing more to do with the law, however good your case Going to law is fatal for a man in your high position I would have written to you and told you what mortification these legal proceedings were causing me, but the thing so agitated and upset me that I simply could not do it I feel thoroughly run down I'm hoping that the thermal baths which I've been ordered to take will do me good I often get a temperature If I knew I should be seeing you soon, that would help me to bear up Auguste is in Geneva, up in the skies since he saw Thiers It is difficult to write him now I don't know where to get at him He expects to be in Venice by the 1st September I have read *Ferragus*<sup>1</sup> which one of my nephews bought in Paris Like a number of other people, he had no use for the *Revue de Paris*, unless it had something of yours in it Are you still doing journalistic work? Talking of that, can you imagine anyone being so careless of his reputation as Janin, who has no compunction about signing a lot of vulgar twaddle to which the *Débats*, once so particular about what it took in the way of reviews and serials, throws open its gracious pages Mere nobody that I am, I would cut my hand off if it descended to writing such insignificant trivialities *Ferragus* is superb, but there are blemishes in it that ought to be removed, because they imply careless thinking and that does not fit in with you at all The *grisette* is out of place the whole time You had made up your mind that the letter should be discovered in a house of ill-fame You sacrificed everything to that

<sup>1</sup> First episode in the *Histoire des Trieze*

But it would take too long to go into it all here I won't start on the subject in a letter till I've given up all hope of sustaining my point with you *viva voce* Except for the *grisette*, who is no doubt a perfect piece of character-drawing in her way, though out of place where she is, the rest is admirable I am devoutly awaiting the *Médecin de Campagne*. That will be the second wholly moral work you have done I should like to see you keeping entirely to that line But, my dear Honoré, why not finish *Le Privilège* before starting on the third lot of 'Droll Tales' since you are not under contract for the latter? And what about all your new editions? Won't you have correcting enough to fill up your time when you don't feel up to anything else?

I found my neighbours had taken to another hunting-ground As for me I am keeping more and more to myself, and I regard it as of very great importance to succeed Carraud, who is nearly well again, promises not to worry you

The *gmidia* or *galant de miel* and the *volcameria* are in bloom; there would be flowers in your bedroom I am astonished that Bucheron has been slandering you, because he is a good fellow. But I am bound to confess that he is very irresponsible, for a man of his age Then again he is influenced by what M. Faucheux says The latter boasts of an intimacy which he does not possess and belches forth delicious horrors about you hardly calculated to assist your matrimonial ventures Then there's Hippolyte Fournier who makes what he likes of you But permit one of the most disinterested

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of your friends to tell you so you, too, can sometimes be cruelly irresponsible It is time to give it up, for every year gives you an excuse the less If you only knew what weapons you put into the hands of this crowd of jealous do-nothings But good-bye, they're waiting for my letter and, as I never know what time I shall be getting up, I dare not leave anything over for the morrow

Ivan is very well He told me yesterday that very likely a man like you never troubled himself whether he existed He was thunderstruck when I said you had mentioned him

*The lawsuit about the Médecin de Campagne had been dragging on for two months, driving Balzac to desperation and upsetting all his plans At the end of August, however, he seized a brief moment of leisure to write at some length to Madame Carrand*

[ 54 ]

[ Paris, end of August 1833 ]

It is a long time since I wrote to you, to you who bestow on me so pure and so beautiful a friendship, on me who would repay it a hundred-fold if I only could You will excuse me, won't you? I've suffered so much, suffered things that I could tell you, heart to heart, but cannot put on paper I shan't even begin to describe what a lawsuit that lasts two whole months is like To my sorrow, I shall not be able to send you *Le Médecin de Campagne* I am not going to accept a copy from that scoundrelly publisher of mine, Mame, and the arbitrators' decision doesn't allot me a single

one You who have soul enough to understand the greatness of this immense work, imperfect as it still is, though it has taken up a hundred and fifty nights and seven months of toil, you will ask what fate it is that brings these outrages upon me at every turn, and why I should be robbed of my author's rights when I have no agreement with the publisher But I will leave all that The book will be out in ten days' time I shall have to bring out another edition before it is issued at twenty sous

You have not written, or got anyone else to write How are you getting on? Do you know that my thoughts have often travelled in the direction of Angoulême, and that I have not so many friends that I cannot give you more than a thought a day Oh, I'm terribly knocked over, a different man To make up for my losses, I've got to start on other works No chance of a rest I had been dreaming of a trip to the Pyrenees with her whom you call my angel, and who, I think, is even more than that We intended to stop a while at Angoulême and go and look at Bourges But misfortune brings everything to nought except love and gratitude, and you will never know what part, what a large and unassailable part is yours in the heart of a poor poet to whom you have ever been tender, hospitable and kind Sometimes, to my surprise, I find myself praying I ask Heaven to grant you the happiness you desire, health for Yvan, and health for you Writing the *Médecin de Campagne* has made a different man of me Prolonged misfortune makes a man lift his eyes towards heaven I am feeling sad

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I feel that work like that saps one's very life But I am not going to repine Among the good moments I have had, I count those that I have spent with you Be sure and tell your lord and master how greatly I am attached to him And good-bye for to-day Think of me, as I love and think of you Send me, or get someone to send me, some news of you If it were not for the expense and the distance, I should come and see you oftener But this year, I am not rich If the case had gone completely against me, I should have given up literature and left France, and gone and taken service in Russia like Pozzo di Borgo But now, instead of taking a holiday, I shall have to start on other work, tremendous work the third set of *Contes Drolatiques*, *Le Privilège* and the last part of the *Études de Mœurs*

Adieu a thousand kind and tender thoughts attend you Get hold of *Le Médecin de Campagne* Read it and listen now and then to the voice you know As for me, I know well enough the parts that will move you and those you will find fault with

I am writing to Limoges to-day I know you saw to things for me there I recognised your handiwork right enough

When you write the Captain [ Périolas ] tell him I do more than merely remember him      HONORÉ

*Balzac is down in the depths, yet never had he greater need of courage to pursue his superhuman task and discharge his obligations*

*On hearing Balzac's doleful news, Madame Carraud at*

*once writes back a letter full of assurances of affection, of tender friendship, devotion and solicitude*

[ 55 ]

de la Poudrerie 29th August 1833

This time last year we were all of us in better spirits I, I had you with me here, you had no stupid and worrying law case hanging over you then, you were for taking a jaunt into Savoy in search of a taste of that happiness which seems perpetually to tantalise and elude you Yes, a stupid case I call it How could a publisher possibly be such a fool as to badger you and beat you down? Merely in his own interests would it not pay him to humour all your artistic notions rather than to treat you like his binder, let us say, whom he can compel to deliver the goods at a certain fixed date? Some people are evidently so blinded by passion as to go dead against their own interests I don't at all know how your case went, but I imagine the result was not such as you had a right to expect The thing is, you see, my dear, that you are too ready to trust people and even to make friends of them Like all high-minded people, you trust all business people to do by you as you would by them, with the result that you are taken in. Could you not, therefore, discover an agent, someone who would stand between you and all the hungry crew that live on your works, someone who would look after your interests better than you do yourself and spare you endless worries? It seems to me that you must hate hearing your spiritual life's blood being haggled over as though it were a yard of calico Why does Auguste go rushing about as he does? How is

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it that his calling and his modest means do not allow him to remain with you and to help you out in all these business matters? One can look after other people's affairs much better than one's own. And so you cannot come!

It grieves me to think of you in Paris, involved in all those disagreeable affairs from which even the heavenly angel cannot always guard you. What is wanted is that you should put some actual distance between yourself and all that swarm of work-people whom you provide with a livelihood, and that other rabble, I mean the authors, whom you put in the shade. There is no doubt that the plot has been well laid. Whenever I pick up a newspaper containing some publishers' announcements, or one of those notices which give an *aperçu* of current literature, I never once see your name mentioned. People cannot forgive you for refusing to have anything to do with the sensational stuff that is now all the vogue. You are the only writer to-day who knows how to portray those hidden emotions that work beneath the surface, the subtleties and overtones of feeling. Not for you those far-fetched catastrophes utterly remote alike from truth, good taste and common sense. But then it may be you would be even too happy, if no cloud ever came to dim the life which you illuminate and which your friends are fain to make so smooth for you. For your friends are very fond of you, albeit they seem to have so little in common with you. If only you could have done with those money troubles! Tell me, for how long is your emancipation deferred? When will you get

the freedom for which you long so greatly and to which I was looking forward with such a beating heart? Once you have got your freedom, you will write nothing but books Someone told us you were writing for a new paper, *Le Saphir* I think it was, or some such name<sup>1</sup> Oh, my dear Honoré, don't unless you are obliged, write anything for a newspaper! Don't fritter away the one solitary, literary genius of the age

However easy a thing writing may be to you, how do you expect to write things worthy of you when you have the obligation hanging over you to hand in your work by some hard and fast date? Haven't you worries enough without that? Why can't you get clear of them? I think I have already told you this, I attach as much importance to your successes, I don't mean your drawing-room and social triumphs (those I deplore, for they spoil your future), it's your real fame, your future renown that I am speaking about,—I attach as much importance to that as if I bore your name, or as if belonged to you so closely as to share in your radiance In wishing you enduring success, an immortal name and the applause of all calm and reason-guided people, I merely obey a law of nature which requires that we should aim at propagating our own personal ideas, especially about those we love Others, who love you as much as I do, will ask no more for you than the triumphs and plaudits of the hour That is not enough for me Besides, when my son is

<sup>1</sup> A legitimist organ Balzac's *Le Refus*, *série de l'Histoire de France*, appeared in the number for May, 1832

old enough to understand you, shall I not have to quote you as a model of intellectual and moral excellence?

I am sending to my bookseller to-morrow for a copy of *Le Médecin de Campagne* Madame Grand-Besançon is also getting a copy, and so is Madame de Campeau, to whom I made mention of it I am not going to say that I shall devour it Yours are not the sort of books that one devours, that is if one wants to understand them I shall get the Major to read it to me, and his cold analysis will temper my enthusiasm, and especially my emotions, so that I trust we shall arrive at a sound judgment Speaking of this, I am a prey to a singular infirmity When I read to myself, I have fits of weeping, for no definite reason that I should care to mention And when I am read aloud to it is worse still And if I am asked to read aloud, it all moves me and makes me look ridiculous To avoid that, I am obliged to detach myself from what I am reading and make it a mere mechanical exercise, and even so I cannot see the thing in an ordinary light When I am observed, or when I have previously braced myself up to a thing, I can endure being read to without making an exhibition of myself, but it brings on a sort of choking sensation, a feeling of inward discomfort which pains me acutely Is it my loneliness that accounts for this hateful susceptibility? For, so far as my own personal sufferings are concerned, or those which arise from my sympathy with others, I have a courage which costs me somewhat dear, but rarely fails me The second edition will belong entirely to you, I take it?

Didn't you get my last letter, then? I took the hot-

bath treatment which had been prescribed for me. It did me good to begin with, but now I am back again where I was when I started I shall never get rid of these pains I hope they won't bring on anything else I should not mind bearing pain if only I could be sure of twelve more years, so that I could see my son grow up But I don't care to dwell on that What I really need is complete rest, to do nothing at all; but that means a lot of expense I am going to stop on here a few days longer, to see if rest and quiet will bring me a little ease

I hesitate to press you to come, because this projected tour of yours has made you lose time, and valuable time, in Paris However, if Paris proves too much for you, if ever you feel that you must have fresh air and a thoroughly friendly atmosphere, think of me and how glad I should be to share a few ideas in common with 'the angel,' for, would you believe it, I sometimes catch myself saying, 'I am sure she thinks so, too!' Oh, think how glorious it would be You would stop a long time, and so make up for the expense of the journey Yes, think of me, if you leave Paris, kindly, simple folk would do you good, and ease the smart of your wounds You are passing through a time of great stress which, as soon as it is over, will leave you stronger than ever When you've reached the position of working without having anyone behind you in a position to say, 'Now then, hurry up!' your work won't wear your life out like this, you won't be living in this breathless never-ending pouring forth of ideas Mon Dieu, how I wish you had arrived at that! Go

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to Russia ! It sends a chill through me when I read the words You play too much into the hands of all that crowd of envious backbiters Never run away after a defeat If you've got to suffer defeat, don't let people like that think you're beaten As for us, who are so fond of you, are we to count for nothing in your eyes ?

Nevertheless, that friendship is the outstanding reality of your life, and of ours as well When a man has reached your age, he doesn't make new friends Old ones are all he really cares about The Captain is not coming in October His sister, who lives at Mantua, arrives in France early in September He won't be here till the beginning of 1834, but we hope then to have him for good It seems pretty well settled that they are going to set up an Artillery Training School at Angoulême and, as it's a new regiment that's coming, he will be of it, as being the youngest squadron-leader in his battalion It is a great piece of luck that brings back so old a friend into our midst, a friend with whom, during our thirteen years of intimate, uninterrupted friendship, thrown together as we were every hour of the day, we never had the shadow of a quarrel

I will see to that matter of the paper for you with all possible dispatch Adieu, all kind and tender thoughts Be strong in the assurance of the affection of your friends

Ivan has not had his paper since his subscription ran out He is very well

*On the 2nd September Balzac answers Madame Carrard's letter*

[ 56 ]

[ Paris ] 2nd September [ 1833 ]

You have every reason, you dear, sweet soul, to love Madame de B[ erny] You are the only woman of whom she is not jealous There is a remarkable similarity in ideas between you the same love of goodness, the same enlightened liberalism, the same love of progress, the same solicitude for the welfare of the masses, the same loftiness of soul and mind, the same delicacy of feeling And so, I love you dearly

I am deeply moved by your letter and I reply to you straight away What is this you say? You are in pain? Now listen to me About this electric treatment It's not an illusion I would come five hundred miles to save you two days' pain You don't know how staunch and exclusive I am in my friendships, and how devoted! Don't run away with the notion that, because I can range over every point in the compass, I cannot maintain my hold on the centre! I still have in my heart, as often as I think of you, a lively gratitude for those times when you bore with me so patiently and so gently, when I was so stupid and irritable with coffee-drinking I wish I were at la Poudrerie!

Now I will tell you all about the law-case The final award has been made MM Dupin and Boivilliers, the two most distinguished advocates at the bar, found that I had wilfully failed to fulfil my obligations, in taking eight months to complete *Le Médecin de Campagne* They have given me four months in which to complete *Les Trois Cardinaux* And they are men of intelligence! If I fail to carry out the terms of the award,

I am to pay a fine of three thousand eight hundred francs, and I shall be discharged

The Duc de Fitz-James has written me a letter which has greatly touched me When he heard the result, he begged me to draw on his banker at sight for three thousand eight hundred francs so that I might free myself from the clutches of this ruffian In thanking him, I said that always, throughout my life, my courage had triumphed over my tribulations, but I promised him that if, owing to some unexpected turn of affairs, I found myself in urgent need of the three thousand eight hundred francs, I would borrow them from him for a month

My publisher was declared guilty of lying, slander and outrageous conduct towards me, but the arbitrators held, nevertheless, that I must continue my business relations with him And these men, we are told, are men of honour! He was ordered to pay me three thousand francs for *Le Médecin de Campagne* which, since the verdict, he has refused to do The costs entailed by the action have been enormous, and this very day my work has been seized in default of payment

Such is my life Seeing lawyers, racing here and racing there, worry upon worry What's the good of it all! I've had a dagger stuck into me every chapter I wrote, all the time I was on this work, which, according to my severest critics, maintains a consistently high level It has cost me, personally, a thousand francs in corrections, which the arbitrators have taken no account of, not to mention days and nights of toil, and the injury to my health brought on by excessive coffee-drinking

But at the end of this week, you will be reading this magnificent work and you'll see the extent of my labours Of a truth I think I could die happy I have done a great thing for my country This book, in my view, is worth more than any law, more than any triumph on the battlefield It is the Gospel in practice. Yes, the second edition belongs entirely to me The tenpenny edition comes out in December I can't do it before What a host of people, even now, have shed tears over the *Médecin de Campagne*! Madame d'Abrantès, who is little given to weeping, burst into tears at the story of the Beresina

I'm only working for one paper, *L'Europe littéraire*, in which I have a five thousand francs share to pay off out of my contributions This paper was on its last legs, but some literary men clubbed together to set it up again The thing is, I can't get along without writing for a paper If I didn't, I shouldn't be able to meet my obligations But it's the last time *As soon as my share is worked off*, no more newspaper work for me! unless I start a paper of my own I've made up my mind to that. I'm doing all I know on the third set of ten Tales It will be out on the 1st October How sorry I am not to be able to give you a copy of the *Médecin*! But you shall have a fine one, on *papier de Chine*, when the revised edition comes out I will send you a sample of the paper

I am going to the *Journal des Eufans* to see about Ivan's paper

Be sure and take care of yourself

But I must say good-bye I've lost count of time

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writing to you I only intended to send you a couple of lines But how can we help running on when we are talking to those we love? You are right Friendships are not to be had ready-made And so every day mine for you feeds and grows on the past as well as on the present All good wishes to the Major If Mme Berny wants to see Bordeaux, we shall perhaps be paying a flying visit to Angoulême in October And now, back to my phrase-making Herewith a thousand flowers of the spirit, blossoms of tender remembrance No, I didn't get the letter telling me about your treatment

*A few days later, about the middle of September, comes another letter from Balzac to Madame Carraud No complaints and consolations this time! It has to do with some business with a bookseller that has to be settled, and about ordering some paper After describing in detail the paper he requires, Balzac continues*

[ 57 ]

[ Paris, mid-September 1833 ]

I will tell you in confidence, Madame Zulma, that I shall most likely have the pleasure of seeing you this month This is how it is the great, the mighty scheme for the issue in instalments of the ninety-six volumes at a subscription price of eighty francs a year has all been arranged Everything is to be signed on Tuesday The estimates have been gone through and confirmed I shall go to Besançon on the 20th to look round the paper markets If we don't find what we want there, we shall fall back on Angoulême.

Anyhow, whatever happens, I shall come and put in a couple of days with you This business has been so planned that it will earn enormous profits I mean that, taking the most conservative estimate, the smartest as well as the most cautious speculators calculate that there will be a profit of anything from ten to twenty thousand francs a month I have reserved a founder's share of twenty-seven thousand francs, divisible into three coupons Auguste has long been the holder of one of them I am writing him to-day I want you to have the option before offering it to anyone else The other coupon belongs to my brother-in-law My own interest is fixed and settled I have had to fight hard to secure possession of this share You will be quite free to come in or not We sign the deed on Tuesday

Good-bye All kind wishes I can't write you in greater detail as I am up to my eyes in work and business Ivan will get the back-numbers [of the *Journal des Enfants*]. The note-paper box is delightful, though I wish it were lovelier still

Would you believe it? The library subscription for the country is fifteen francs a month, whereas we are only asking eight for eight volumes, the equivalent of six octavo volumes This is the result of two new discoveries in printing which will revolutionise book-production The authors will be well paid and we are guided by one sole practical aim, and that is to put the masses in the way of learning something about history

Good-bye Nine months from now I shall have no more anxiety about the future and shall be able to work

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without being dogged by cares and worries (Keep the business matter to yourself)

All kind messages to the Major

The two different reams of paper will cost money  
Write and tell me how much But whatever the cost,  
let the manufacturer go ahead, I will take them

*The prospect of an early visit from her friend sends Mme Carraud into the seventh heaven She will be able to tell him in words how delighted she is with the Médecin de Campagne, which she has just finished reading*

[ 58 ]

la Poudrerie, 17 September [ 1833 ]

I have been unable to write to you before, my dear, and even if I had been, I should not have done so till I had read *Le Médecin de Campagne* I am still so deeply moved by it that my head is in a whirl I do not share all the ideas you advance, some of them indeed I consider contradictory, yet I still look on it as a very great and very beautiful book, and unquestionably far and away superior, from the psychological point of view, to anything you have yet done This is something like<sup>1</sup> I love you to write things like this This is the kind of work I should like to see you busy on The strange thing is that the *Médecin* is so simple, so natural that it seems to me, who know the way you work, that it must have been thrown off at a sitting There is no cleverness about it, and that's what makes

<sup>1</sup> On the 23rd September, 1832, Balzac wrote to his mother saying, 'By working three days and three nights I have completed a book entitled *Le Médecin de Campagne*' (*Correspondance*, 1, 202)

it so fine, in my eyes Honoré, you generally have more vogue, more celebrity than you care about But in *Le Médecin*, there is something better than that There is the sort of thing I like Who, in the inspirer of the discourses of M Benassis, would recognise the author of the Droll Tales, and what would you not have done by now if you had not been beset by these innumerable worries? Anyhow, this is where your future lies, and *Le Médecin* is the starting point of a host of other things you'll have to do in the same manner Come now, I embrace you enthusiastically for *Le Médecin*

Your business enterprise, with its many chances of success, rejoices my heart, and yet I cannot help feeling a little anxious lest, with all the material preoccupations it will bring upon you, it should interfere with your work and prevent you from giving your mind freely to other things And I am ambitious for you It rubs me up terribly the wrong way when I hear people speak of you as a clever man It is an insult I endure in silence when it is addressed to me personally, but I cannot tolerate it when it is said about you But to come back to the big business, as you call it, I am almost sure it will come off, and, if Heaven gives ear to my prayers for the prompt sale of a property we are by way of getting rid of, I shall be able to take up the third part of that share, otherwise I should be obliged, to my great regret, to see it pass into other hands, for we haven't a penny to our name It is to extricate ourselves from that state of impecuniosity, which landlords are only too familiar with, that I have agreed

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to dispose of one of the estates comprised in my dowry As regards the paper which you are going to look for in the Vosges, I may as well tell you that Messrs Lagrange have a monopoly of all the paper manufactured in that district One of the brothers lives in Paris and I fancy he might be able to save you the journey, as it seems that there would be no chance of your benefiting by competitive tenders You shall have the paper you want for your personal use as soon as possible

Are you working on the things you intend giving to the public? That's what everybody will want to know, as soon as they hear about your scheme It won't do for you to give too much of your time to it The sort of success you want is of a different order Since we finished *Le Médecin*, we have been trying to read other things, but it's no use Everything else seems laboured, heavy, devoid of point and significance We have gone back to you, and yesterday it was *Birotteau* that provided us with our daily pabulum, *Birotteau*, my favourite! But masterly as it is, this story of the wonderful piece of scientific investigation which laid bare the mystery of the priest and the old maid does not come up to *Le Médecin* In a week's time, I shall read *Le Médecin* again I want to let it mature in my mind When I had been through it, it was borne in upon me that I should have to read it again, and more than once

If your enterprise is to score a complete success, it will not owe it exclusively to the talents you display to the world, to the number of your subscribers, or

the excellence of your typography What you must have, above all, is a good accountant who will tell you the very moment your assets begin to compare disastrously with your liabilities He must keep his finger on the pulse of the business He should be a clever man with a cool head, and, above all, with a scrupulous regard for accuracy Think it over carefully before you make your choice In my view, the thing is most important

I return to *Le Médecin*, for I can think of nothing else This book has taken complete possession of me, it has soaked its way into me, I live on it and nothing else But your publisher must be a prodigious stupid, blind even to his own interests, to have fallen out with you when you were giving him a thing like that to sell And then again Dupin ! The thing is, you see, that he's merely a clever man, and it's not men like him who are capable of appreciating *Le Médecin* If every sentence had shown a straining after effect, if it had contained words and phrases that pulled you up with a jerk, he would have deemed that such a book would have taken a long time to write But it is so simple and so profound that it never entered his head that you had had to give a second thought to it It's not people like that whom this fine book will enlist among your supporters, but spirits of the finer sort, good people, upright people unconscious of their own worth, and all those good, brave souls who, though not understanding the merits of its craftsmanship, will look on it as a genuine piece of life, a story true in all its details, and who, when some bitter trial

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comes their way, will think of Benassis Oh yes, do have the one franc edition, *cher ami*, and that, not only from the business point of view, but for the sake of mankind

There are plenty of choice spirits, condemned, by the immutable laws of society, and by the toil they have to perform, to present a plain and even a rough exterior to the world, who yet would have it in their hearts to weep over the sorrows of *Le Médecin* It had never occurred to me that anyone could set a time-limit for the production of a work of the mind! But if you do the third set of Tales how are you going to manage to work on *Les Trois Cardinaux* and deliver it in time? How cruel and tiresome the whole thing is! However, don't let yourself be cast down Never be afraid of anything, seeing that you wrote *Le Médecin* in the midst of similar anxieties

I am almost inclined to hope that you will not do any business in the Vosges, but your time is so precious to everyone that I stifle this desire It would make me happier to think that you were coming because you needed distraction and because we could give it you I have been told that Messrs Montgolfier at Saint Maur have a printing and paper works, and that their paper is of superior quality and reasonable in price

My life has few diversions, but yet it is a happy one I have heard from Auguste He was nearly drowned in the Lake of Lucerne the very day he told you about the excursion he was going to make on it His sketches, his brushes, his paints and his palette are all at the bottom of the lake Fortunately he had not much

finished work with him I am almost beginning to expect you Why can't I tell the leaves not to fall and the flowers to keep their freshness? But if I've only got the fireside and its delights to offer you, well, its pleasures will be so much the greater For a week past, my time has been monopolised by strangers whom I have had to entertain all day long I'm quite used up and quite dazed with the effort I've got to delve down very deep into myself to get at anything that's worth having And thither you must follow me if you would fain have any of the sweet things my heart retains for you I have no faculty for expressing myself to-day. Ivan has got his *Journal [des Enfants]*, thank you, I did not want to worry you about it

*Balzac could not find any paper at Besançon to suit his requirements, and pushed on as far as Neuchatel (which he spells Neufchâtel) Whence he wrote to Madame Carraud as follows*

[ 59 ]

Neufchâtel 29 [ September 1833 ]

I've just escorted the great Borget back to the frontiers of the sovereign estates of this city As you may well imagine, you played an important part in our long and friendly talk We are very fond of you and, as regards devotion, we are faithful as dogs

What you wanted to happen, has happened I have been unable to get any paper to suit me at Besançon, and the man at Besançon, to whom I spoke of Angoulême and M Calluau, said it was just possible I might get it there But I have got so much business and so

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much work on hand that it was really impossible for me to go all the way to la Poudrerie for no practical purpose (I allude to the paper) And Auguste, who is fully aware how much I love you, and what a delight it is for me to spend a few days at la Poudrerie, has advised me to write you in advance about the manufacture of our paper If M Calluau can undertake to supply it, I will come and see you and fix up the contract in accordance with what you tell us If not, I shall stay on in Paris, getting ready for the initial deliveries of our enterprise and finishing off my literary contracts, which have been made such a burden for me

Paris, 5 October

I finish here the letter I started at Neuchatel Imagine, just as I had ensconced myself comfortably by the fire to write you a long letter in reply to your last, some people came to fetch me to go and view some sites, and that took up all my time till the 1st October I was four days on the journey, and now here I am back again, feeling very tired

I am not going into any more details in this letter because you will find, marked 'to be called for,' at M Sazerac's, a little case, or package, with your note-paper box inside it Be careful when you undo the parcel The key is inside it wrapped up in paper and, being small, it might easily get lost In the box you will find a letter explaining everything touching M Calluau

This, therefore, is merely a letter of advice, and, as it precedes the other, I send you with it all my

affectionate good wishes Try and so arrange things  
that I may come to see you I should be very delighted  
for our paper to be made at Angoulême A good hand-  
shake for the Major

HONORÉ

*If it took Balzac till his return to Paris on the 5th October to finish the letter he had begun at Neuchatel at the end of September, the reason was that his head was full of something very different from this quest of paper and paper-makers It was all very well for him to give out that he was going to Besançon, his real destination was Neuchatel where, on the 23rd September, he had joined l'Etrangère, the mysterious Eve de Hanska, née Comtesse Rzewuska, the lady who was to console Balzac for his lack of success with the Marquise de Castries But he only divulged his secret to his sister Laine, and never breathed a word of it to Madame Carraud, either in the first letter or the second, which was written on the lightest and most delicate vellum*

[ 60 ]

Paris 5 [ October ] Evening [ 1833 ]

As you see I am writing you on the choicest paper in the world, and I shall enclose my letter in what is certainly the most fashionable of envelopes Are they yours? I don't know I found them here They were brought by some unknown person who did not wish me to know who had sent them

If you were the sender, I should be astonished, for you know how much I love you, how greatly I esteem your sentiments and your wonderful elevation of soul I imagine we are above playing off these little mysteries on each other It must be someone else and, if it is, I

don't want to be under an obligation to that person I can accept no presents except from you whom I love, and I should like to give you so many things and so much affection in return that you would be always in my debt So if it was not you who sent this stationery, try and find out who did, so that I may pay it back If it wasn't you, I imagine there must have been some mistake Let it rest at that !

Your scent-sachet is not in this box because it is not finished yet I will send it later Write me soon, so that I may know if the paper comes from you If it was anyone else who sent it, I couldn't endure it, for the very reason that I like it so much

Now to get down to business

Borget is taking up, out of M Survile's share, two coupons of three thousand francs each, and my mother and Survile three of the same amount I have one which I am keeping for my own account, that makes six coupons There are thus three left over, each share consisting of nine coupons of three thousand francs each Of these remaining three, my mother, I fancy, intends to take two for my brother, so there's only one, for three thousand francs, left Borget will bring you a copy of our deed of partnership See whether this part-share would suit you I should have very much liked Major Périollas and you to have something in this concern, for it's as safe as any speculation can be That being so, think it over, and if you think so small a share not worth while, I could come to some arrangement with my mother

Now as to the paper affair Please be kind enough

to go and see M. Calluau and acquaint him with our terms of business. We require machine-made paper, 2' 11" by 2' 7", in reams of 500 sheets weighing from 28–30 lbs. We are not willing to pay more than 55 to 60 centimes per lb. As to the make, I send you a sample showing the tint and the texture. This sample is of a paper priced at sixty-five centimes the pound, which has been offered us. To save a matter of a half-penny per pound we would ransack the whole of France, for our profits depend on reducing our working expenses to the lowest possible limit. That having been made clear, if M. Calluau agrees to do business with us, he must let us have a specimen quire, and the whole order must be up to sample. We will pay cash on delivery. To begin with, we shall want 120 reams per month. We may double the order after two months and triple it in six. He must always keep up our stock to 140 reams, so that we may have a supply immediately available in the event of our needing paper at a day's notice.

We shall want the first consignment delivered between the 15th November and the 1st December.

If he agrees with this outline of our requirements we, my two partners and myself, will draw up a draft agreement here, and send with it a specimen sheet, and I would come post haste to Angoulême.

Will you, please, you and M. Caraud, see about this business with all speed, so that I may get a very prompt reply. Our business demands that we should go ahead like hell.

I wanted to talk to you about you and me, but I've no

time for anything I am hoping to come to Angoulême and then we'll have a good day or two's talk together But I'm not going to wait till I make that journey to tell you how full my heart is of affection and gratitude for your last letter, and how my literary vexations urge me to take refuge in the hearts of those who love me, and to find consolation there You don't know how *Le Médecin* has been greeted? With a torrent of abuse! The three papers of my own party who have noticed it expressed the profoundest contempt for the work and its author About the rest, I do not know But I don't trouble much You are my public, you and a few other choice spirits whom I like to please, but especially you, whom I am so proud to know, you whom I have never seen, or listened to, without deriving something to my advantage, you who are brave enough to help me pull up the weeds from my garden, you urge me on towards the goal of perfection, you who are so like the angel to whom I owe so much, in a word, you who are indulgent to my shortcomings No one knows as I do with what speed I betake myself to you From you it is I seek encouragement when anything has wounded me 'Tis the wood-pigeon homing to its nest The affection I have for you is like none other, and knows, and can know, neither like nor rival Where you are, the atmosphere is so bright, so gentle Now that I am far away, I can declare, without fear of being put to silence, all that I think about you, about your soul, your spirit and your life Mon Dieu, nobody wishes more than I do, that your pathway here below may be fair and pleasant, I would fain send



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ing to the Major Try and arrange things so that I may see you a week from now

Kiss Ivan on the forehead for me

[ 61 ]              From la Poudrerie 10 October [ 1833 ]

As soon as he got your letter, Carraud put his gout on a charabancs and went off to Veuze<sup>1</sup> His journey was unsuccessful They cannot understand there how it is that your reams, if they measure what you say you want, can possibly weigh so little Their letter paper, twenty inches by sixteen, weighs thirteen pounds Therefore, what you require, if in exact conformity with the sample you sent them, would weigh three and a half times as much, allowing for the difference in the dimensions The cheapest quality paper they produce is priced at not less than sixty-five or seventy centimes per pound Furthermore, it would be impossible for them to manufacture paper of the particular size you specify without enormous waste They made it clear to Carraud that paper of the surface and weight specified by you would be about as thick as a piece of onion-skin Taking your sample, they could not manufacture a paper of a width of forty-eight or forty-nine inches and of indefinite length at less than a franc per pound Moreover, they make very little cheap paper of any kind and are not anxious to make any at all They are of opinion that the only place they make the sort of paper you want is Saint Maur, at M Montgolfier's, where they make use of all sorts of material,

<sup>1</sup> Near Ruelle-sur-Touvre, just outside Angoulême

here they never use cotton They say, moreover, that for the price of a ream, which would be round about sixteen francs fifty, you would hardly get good newspaper quality Carraud thinks, with them, that you made a mistake when you said thirty pounds, and that thirty kilos was what you meant. From what we gather from other paper-makers we think you would do well to jump at the sixty-five centimes paper, if, that is, they can supply it at the required rate You can imagine how put out we are I went to Angoulême so as to learn as soon as possible how Carraud's journey had turned out and I was utterly disappointed I too had been so looking forward to those two days' talk

I picture you so busy, so hampered and hindered in every sort of way, that I dare not so much as give vent to a hope, lest I should add still further to your perplexities You know, Caro, you spoil me I really felt worried at all the nice things you said about me I should almost feel tempted, were it not that you would suffer, to thank all those people who torment you and fling you, so to speak, into our hearts How blind they must be Fancy running down *Le Médecin de Campagne!* I read one of the notices, the one in the *Temps* The one thing that astonished me about that mass of abuse and crass stupidity was that its author, M André Delrieux, should ever have had the courage to sign it. One would think he must love you a lot to go and sacrifice himself like that Fancy going and flinging yourself heart and soul into the arms of a political party! My dear Honoré, when one is endowed as you are with gifts so unique, one must live in and

for the future All these party differences vanish at such a lofty level The man of the future should only pay worship to immutable ideals on which time can have no effect but to bring them to perfection, changing nothing essential in them If you had begun by being a politician, you would have been able to pursue your career in the party best adapted to satisfy your conscience But, in the lofty place you occupy, trample beneath your feet all the vexations of the present time Keep only your sympathies intact, for they are sacred

Mon Dieu, if you became a public man, they, all those people whose self-esteem you have so tumbled in the dust, would kill you, or at least give you a mortal distaste for life I don't really think that the consciousness of the good you were doing would enable you to put up with such a dismal mode of life Had I not searched conscientiously within me and forearmed myself against illusion, you would sow the seeds of pride in my heart If you gain anything from my society, that can only be because I differ so widely in my ways from all the others who approach you I never come to you with words of praise upon my lips, to start with, I should find it difficult to utter them, and, next, I don't know that I should care to identify myself with all the people who smother you with incense I look on my affection as a thing too pure, too lofty, to come down to things like that I would not have a grain of *amour propre* enter into our friendship, and that's no easy matter, as you may imagine I long and yearn for your perfection as for that of none other

So bright is the blaze in which you dwell, that the slightest stain is visible to all, and yet who would think of showing you any indulgence? Indulgence is wholly and solely for the second-rate, mediocrity comes in for all the bouquets. In the end you will share the fate of Moses, as portrayed by some poet or other whom you read to me.<sup>1</sup> If the Angel and if I were not beside you, not a hand would press your hand, not a heart would open to take you to its shelter. The day will come when your place will be too high. One has to put up with the position one has made for oneself. No more hiding your light under a bushel! Wear then, without repining, your crown of thorns, your crown of fame, we will wipe your brow ever and anon. Wish me no more than the strength to bring up my son. I have lived my life. I must follow out my destiny to its appointed end. I am called to the achievement of a great task, I have a man to mould, and I am alone. If, when he is twenty, Ivan is what I would have him be, I shall grow old without a murmur. That will be my *Médecin de Campagne*. Think, then, no more of me, as me. My life is merged in the life of my beloved little one. To have a thought for me ever and anon, when one lives in Paris, and lives as you live there, is, Honoré dear, a miracle of friendship beyond requital. Then you have attained the goal that you were fain to reach, the goal of putting someone irrevocably in your debt. But I can bear the weight of a burden such as that.

I have the writing-case, and I am well-nigh as much

<sup>1</sup> ‘Mighty, O Lord, Thou madest me, and lonely’ (Alfred de Vigny, *Poèmes, Livre Mystique, Moïse*)

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entranced as I am touched by it Nothing could more wholly fulfil my dreams of elegance, or give me a better idea of your joys as an artist It is indeed a charming thing As you divined, there was a miscalculation, for I did not know you were away when the paper was sent off If it has come up to what you had in mind, I am satisfied We are still in the same position, that is to say, we have no money Every day we expect to effect a sale, but I fear that, for many a month to come we shall have no funds at our disposal, for whatever cash we receive down will go to pay off a creditor who has need of it Never, perhaps, was I more acutely conscious of the advantages of having a few thousand francs ready to one's hand I should have much liked to share the same chances as you I have had my heart in this venture for such a long time now, that I have come to look upon it as my own So, although, as is only too likely, I may not be able to take a share in it, I shall contribute with all my feeble means to its success Whatever letters, or deeds, can accomplish, in these I shall not fail Auguste does not expect to be here for a good month yet Perhaps he will send us a copy of the deed<sup>1</sup> before he returns It is a pleasant thing to own property when you live on your estates When you don't, it is nothing but a constant worry to make the two ends meet

Good-bye, the postman is waiting for my letter which I couldn't begin before, because I was not back from Angoulême It makes me sad to say good-bye,

<sup>1</sup> The Articles of Association of the Company formed to supply books at one franc per volume

for this letter takes away all chance of seeing you for a long time to come Adieu

*Mme Carraud's fears were well founded As it turned out, her cash resources were insufficient to allow her to take a share in Balzac's Company Alas, the pity of it!*

[ 62 ] [ la Poudrerie ] 16th [ October 1833 ]

I am mortally depressed, Honoré dear First because the sale did not come off as I wanted, and leaves me no means of taking part in your enterprise The deed was put through without Carraud, my father acting for him, and the mode of payment does not leave us with enough to liquidate our debt and to take up our part-share in the Company as we had hoped to do Secondly, M Dupac has just written to tell me that his unfortunate brother-in-law has lost his place So there they are again, without bread to put in their mouths Imagine it! Starving, and unable to work on the land, or to beg The poor fellow has got a book he's translated that would keep him going for a bit, if he could sell it But selling it is no easy matter See, my dear friend, what you can do to help me in this matter Get someone to buy it of him, no matter what the price He has already come to grief over one work, it would indeed be charity well bestowed Whatever the book is like, it must be worth something There are so many worthless ones about Please, Honoré, please do something to help I know I'm only adding to your stock of troubles, but it is so frightful to see people in want like this Just imagine it! No bread!

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We who find things enough to grumble at in the midst of plenty, don't know what it is to have a wife and child starving and cold, with nothing to give them to stave off ills that we haven't a notion of And to think that he cannot get any work, poor fellow, thoroughly honest, a good clerk and a good accountant as he is It's enough to drive one to despair I am knocking at every door I don't know whether I shall be able to get him a job Poor Dupac is wilting under the weight of these repeated worries Stint themselves as they may, they are unable to provide themselves with their daily bread My head is turned with it all, it darkens my whole outlook I cannot bring myself to think of anything else Come to my aid, Honoré dear, and, if by any chance you could get him something to do, no matter what the salary, or how servile the work, think of me Oh, think of me, get him into something, see that they have bread to eat! Winter is coming, and what will they do then?

Honoré, I cannot go on I am sad enough for tears

Adieu My love, and heaven bless you

ZULMA CARRAUD

*Balzac replies at once to his friend's heart-breaking request<sup>1</sup> She immediately sent the unfortunate M de Balay, Dupac's brother-in-law, to see him, armed with this missive*

[ 63 ]

You understood, my dear one Thanks and thanks again! Whatever you are able to do, I shall not forget that you responded at once to my appeal Here he is,

<sup>1</sup> This reply is lost

poor M de Balay Try and make some use of him I am going to put myself in touch with some people at Saintes, and all will be ready for your coming If my lord and master consents, I shall go with you or, what would be better still, we shall both go with you Two more good days you promise me I shall make the most of them, for I fancy they are going to be few and far between in the future I am expecting Auguste He will be here, I fancy, at the same time as you I have thought of Thérèse for your binder, but it is almost impossible to tackle the question If she sold her property, she would have between fifteen and twenty thousand francs, perhaps If she only had fifteen thousand, your man would be satisfied and she, I think, would be delighted at getting out of the hell she is now in But how can one bring the matter up? Come and see what can be done

Adieu, the best thing I can bid you do is to picture to yourself the sensations of delight which your letter caused me It rivets our love for one another Adieu

*Balzac, greatly moved by the poor old man's visit, endeavours to make things better for him Émile de Girardin will be sure to find him a post and on the 4th November, 1833, Balzac writes to Mme Carraud as follows*

[ 64 ]

[ Paris 4th November 1833 ]

I owe you, my Angel of Friendship, some account of your protégé I have seen Mme de Girardin [ Delphine ] When her husband gets home ( he returns from Brittany on the 6th ), there will perhaps be some

good news to give this poor old man, whose lamentable case sent a thrill of anguish through me I don't know of anything more profoundly touching than the figure of calm resignation he presents, with his hair turned white by calamity Émile needs a man on whom he can depend At the moment I cannot employ M de Balay Émile can And what can be, shall be, or I'll know the reason why

I take it you've got Borget with you Happy man ! As for me I'm toiling like a galley-slave I've got to put off my journey for a fortnight<sup>1</sup> I can't get away from Paris till after my first instalment has been published [*the Études de Mœurs au XIXe Siècle*] and the second put in order Tell him about my contract That will rejoice him, artist that he is ! As for his putting any money into the thing, let him do as his fancy prompts him Heaven knows, I should be grieved beyond measure that he should have any qualms or the shadow of a doubt, about this business It was up to me to write him as I did, and make him the offer I did That being so, tell him now that the matter is held up owing to lack of paper We haven't as yet made a satisfactory bargain

Write me, or let him write, if he wants me to lay in his stock of wood while the weather is fine, then I am going to put pressure on Moreau<sup>2</sup> to complete

<sup>1</sup> This journey, to which Balzac refers without making mention of its object, was a journey to Geneva to join Mme Hanska

<sup>2</sup> Upholsterer, 3 Boulevard des Capucines Moreau it was who fitted up for Balzac the famous scarlet poppy salon in the rue des Batailles, described in *La Fille aux Yeux d'or*

his contract Does he want Moreau to make him a bed? My batch won't be out till the 20th I shan't be able to get away before the 24th Between then and now I've got a hundred sheets to read through for press and then correct in proof That makes five a day, and, besides that, I have several writing jobs to do, worrying things, letters to write and calls to make

So there! Good-bye All kind thoughts Why, yes, of course, Thérèse would be happy with Spachmann<sup>1</sup> In the first place she would be adored by him all her life Spachmann has a heart of gold He's a good fellow, a man of feeling And he's got courage In a word, he's a very worthy German who, with only ten thousand francs, would make his fortune, and all Thérèse would have to do would be to keep the books, make out the invoices and look after the cash To start with, she wouldn't need more than six thousand francs, and she would certainly be happy and live as well (materially speaking) in Paris, as she does where she is now Look to it It could easily be done Better be Madame Spachmann, than go on living the awful life she is living now

Give my warmest regards to the Major His gout pains me You understand all I would say to Borget, the great Borget, and better still, all I would say to you, don't you?

And now for Carthage, Carthage! That *delenda Carthago* which keeps me working day and night N B Spachmann is a man of education and does

<sup>1</sup> Balzac's binder



that unwillingness to modify my convictions, which has so often been imputed to me as a fault. We used to call him Captain *Rud'air*. He is now a power in the land and imports his autocratic ways into his official dealings Ah, power ! What a thing it is ! Like wealth, it vitiates everything with which it comes in contact And so, if it were not unkind not to wish one's friends to be prosperous according to their notions of prosperity, I should hope you would be as much out of the lime-light as I am How great one must be to keep oneself unstained, with an income of thirty thousand francs a year ! How just and upright one must be. to be anything but a second-rate ! Howbeit, Honoré, may Heaven smile on you and shower wealth upon you Political power I do not wish you, it would mean forsaking one of my articles of belief The great Auguste, at the moment of writing, is stretched out full length in an easy-chair, softly gliding, may be over one of his Swiss lakes He is giving us the winter, and I hope it will prove more fruitful than the last I make him stick at his work: he did a lot, and made good progress while he was away He must lose no time in making himself independent he is not rich, and his people keep a tighter hand on him than he is, perhaps, aware of. Independence is the first condition of success, especially for a man like him

A few days ago, at the theatre ( there is rather a good thing going on here ) several officers behind me were talking of a M Bohain I swung round and asked who the gentleman might be It was your man. My dear Honoré, do you really know anything about this M

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Bohain? Do you know the sort of reputation he has? Do you know what everybody says about him? Have you thoroughly thought out your partnership plan, and are you aware what it would mean to put your signature alongside his? Heavens, I would give anything to see you rich, but a man should stand out above his gold, and outshine his worldly circumstances. And though your enterprise, if the worst came to the worst, would damage you more than it would damage anyone, and though the bulk of the misfortune would fall on you, it is essential that your partnership should not be such as to excite prejudice against you whose capabilities as a financier are entirely unproved. I assure you that, from all I hear, I am strongly led to believe that the name of your collaborator, if it becomes generally known, will be enough to check the flow of your subscriptions altogether. I said as much to Auguste the very day he arrived. He replied that you were aware of it. But that cannot be. You could not possibly contemplate entering into partnership with such a man. If he were just an ordinary shareholder, the thing would be different, his money would be as good as anyone else's, provided his personal influence did not enter into the matter. I am telling you about this fresh worry, for a worry it is to me, and a real one, to feel that you, who are already the object of so much slander, should be thus further compromised. One can outface a slander, but the truth is another matter. It won't be any good protesting that your intentions were blameless, if it gets about that you knew the man beforehand!

We are longing for you to be here, they will be bright

days in our winter, the days you devote to us Do not let frost catch you unawares, you would never have the courage to start Tell me something about Laure I wrote her a regular volume I believe it scared her, and that she doesn't mean to give me another opening

I did not go into details with Thérèse about the marriage question I merely told her that I knew of someone who would marry her I thought her curiosity and imagination would be set going, but, so far, she hasn't referred to it again It is true that she is watched with a closeness as offensive to her as it is to me Still, if you came, you could talk to her quite easily, even before Madame Rose Anything would be preferable to what she has to endure in that family She belongs to a class that is new to France but which was introduced into England long ago<sup>1</sup> I've been meaning to tell you for a long time that a young man who may be taken to represent the general run of intellectual readers, knowing that I was a friend of yours, said to me, 'What a good service M Balzac has done in giving an account of Lambert's brief existence And how Lambert would have developed our ideas, into what a new world of thought he would have led us had he not died before his time! Ah! Madame, would that I too had been at Vendôme' That gives their *quæstus* to the people that say Lambert is a puppet

Good-bye, dear friend, do not forget poor M de Balay Carraud is greatly attached to you He's got rid of his gout· for how long I wonder! His powerful narcotic keeps bringing it on again It's an excess, like

<sup>1</sup> More than one example is to be found in Dickens

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any other I feel a weight off my mind, now I know you are free of the obligations that were weighing you down so cruelly You've too much sense to get into such an unfortunate position again You've two fine money-making ideas which ought to enable you to do marvels Well, then !

Till this coming month, then !!

*Balzac hastens to satisfy Mme Carraud's wishes and tells her that he has warmly recommended her protégé to Émile de Girardin*

[ 66 ] [ Paris, after 11th November, 1833 ]

If I don't answer your letter straight away I run the risk of not answering it at all, for I'm being swept away by a torrent of proofs, writing jobs, compositions and business affairs which leave me no time to think of anything

I have just written to M de Balay Yesterday I saw Émile de Girardin and he will go and see him He can have a job of eighty or a hundred francs a month there, but it took *you* to enable me to put up with Émile's impertinence

I shan't be able to get to Angoulême before January ( sometime between the 1st and the 15th ) I am going on my trip to Geneva and I shall stop there a month But I shall come You may be sure of that

As for M Bohain, there are a lot of lies current about him, and also one or two truths Believe me, I am much too careful of the white garment called fame, honour, reputation, to let any stain fall on it

Thanks for your kind letter, and for Auguste's too  
Tell him that all shall be done as he wishes, that I am  
his banker and that, when I come, he can tell me what  
he wants I can't write to him now, but that doesn't  
prevent my thinking of him and loving him

I don't get more than five hours' sleep From mid-  
night till noon I do my writing, from noon until  
four I correct my proofs By the 25th, I shall have four  
volumes in print *Eugéne Grandet* will astonish you  
I've still got another eight months' work before me  
After that I shall be as free as air

Something of grave importance in my life has  
happened, but I can't tell you about it till I get to Angou-  
lême I may have need of all your friendship in a matter  
about which I cannot confide in anyone but you  
It will come to a head in January I think And now,  
good-bye In January, I will talk things over with  
Thérèse I have given a word or two of hope to Spach-  
mann, and, really, I am so convinced that the whole  
thing would be such an excellent arrangement that I  
wish something could be said to Thérèse about it,  
if Auguste can manage it But what with the neighbours  
and the risk of Thérèse letting her tongue wag, the  
thing is anything but plain sailing

Adieu All kind thoughts, and tell M. Carraud and  
Auguste all the things I cannot say here

*However, the position of Mme Carraud's protégés grows  
desperate Something must be done at all costs to save  
them Mme Carraud resumes her pen and writes again to  
Balzac*

[ 67 ]

[ la Poudrerie, 19th November, 1833 ]

I have just had another letter from M Dupac, a heart-rending letter, telling me his unhappy people will die of starvation if I do not come to their rescue I will see that they do not come to that pass, but I cannot support them indefinitely Don't relax your efforts, my dear, and be sure I shall always gratefully remember the trouble you take in this affair That gaunt phantom, Hunger, is again abroad and will not leave me Hunger, good God! Heaven bless M de Girardin in all his undertakings, for his kind deed Bid him make haste, I implore you

And you—will repose never visit your pillow? My poor friend, for ever goaded, for ever being hounded by a horde of publishers, printers, brandishing bundles of proofs at you Your life would be an enviable one if you only had to put on paper the torrent of ideas that surge round you, but all this material part of the business! It's hateful Ah well, it all brings fame and money in its train, that's one consolation As regards fame, I didn't mean to say that you were not careful of its virgin purity, but I know how enthusiastic you are and how easily led This man is a clever fellow no doubt, and he's caught you in his lure If he has been unjustly slandered, I am sorry for it, and if your name in juxtaposition with his is calculated to whitewash him, I should praise you for risking it, but, as it's a business enterprise that's at stake, I have qualms I repeat, I don't like your having such a partner You know better than anybody, you

prober of the human heart, how evil communications corrupt good manners, and as I don't quite see how this gentleman is going to further the success of your enterprise, I cannot make out why you have gone to the trouble of digging him out of the mud-heap in which he was floundering, unless, as I said before, you wished to rehabilitate him In that case, the more credit to you, for a kind and disinterested action And now scold me for leaning my weight on all your worries, as if I liked making you feel them Oh, God ! it's not that But it gives me such pain when I see the reasons, specious as they are or may be, which give rise to all the evil that is said about you Honoré, my dear, I am all for anything that is likely to be useful to you, agreeable to whatever is calculated to help you in any way *Whatever* the nature of the event that threatens you, my heart and my house are yours There you may lay down what burden you will, without fear of importunity, or indiscretion Not a single question shall be put to you, whether by me or mine, not even a questioning glance Even if there was something you wanted done, but which you did not feel inclined to go into details about, you could put the matter as succinctly as possible, quite objectively Only let me know what I can do to help you I don't want to know *why* I am helping you Use me more than you would yourself I am your friend Betake yourself to me and me alone in your perplexity I should like you to realize how much I am on your side Come as soon as you can Truffles are good, this year I will see you have as many as you want

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Good-byc, I have still got my poor protégé to look after Honoré! Imagine it, they are hungry, all three of them ! The artist is your staunch friend

Next year I hope to welcome you at Frapesle You must see it Adieu

[ 67A ] [ POSTSCRIPT IN AUGUSTE BORGET'S HAND ]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Will you ask Rose [*i.e.* Balzac's cook, at No 1, rue Cassini] to have a look among my linen I believe she will find two cambric handkerchiefs with a border round them Next time you have occasion to send anyone near the Palais-Royal, please have them delivered at M Bougougnon's, No 28, rue des Bons Enfants Adieu, work hard and keep well I am one with you in all your troubles, just as much as I was when you used to tell me about them at the fire-side Are you rich or poor? Does life go smoothly with you, materially speaking? Haven't you got a shirt belonging to the Major?

*What time Balzac is kept riveted to his desk by hard work in Paris, M Remi Tourangin, Mine Carraud's father, was breathing his last at Frapesle Balzac learns the news from this further letter*

[ 68 ]

Frapesle, 18 December 1833

Caro, it's a long time since I wrote to you But I have been working very hard for you and I thought that would absolve me But in the midst of my dreams of things to come, for we are definitely leaving la

Poudrerie, I have had a great blow I have lost my father He was the rallying point for the whole family, the various members of which will now be dispersed according to their several interests and situations without much prospect of ever getting together again It is one more tie, and a strong one, gone out of my life Here am I amid innumerable things my father thought of and had carried out, and now the life and soul has gone out of them all His end was calm and peaceful He shut his eyes while my sister Madame Nivet was giving him something to drink He had caught a chill There was nothing in the nature of a spasm, no effort to get quit of this world They thought he had just dropped off to sleep He was to have had some people in that day to celebrate his eighty-third birthday You never knew him, Honoré How you would have marvelled to see a man of his age so full of ideas How his mental faculties, which were always exceptional, would have astonished you. You must love me more than ever now, for there is one the less in whose heart I may seek repose

I must thank you very much for all you have done for M de Balay The poor man was deeply moved and you have earned me countless blessings He has left the situation you found for him and taken another which he thinks is safer You are too broad-minded to take umbrage at that, and if ever he needed help again, I should not hesitate to seek your aid You are killing yourself with work Can't you get a little rest?

I shall expect you this spring at my hermitage at Frapesle, if, that is, a house under repair does not strike

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you as too impossible to live in We shall have the library, the billiard-room and your bedroom available The latter is not very modern, perhaps, but you would choose it among all others Will you come and say good-bye to la Poudrerie?

Work on and don't lose heart There are people in the world whose love for you would make up for everything

Adieu, your friend, always your friend

*Madame Carraud's letter, which was addressed to the Rue Cassini, did not find Balzac there It was sent on to him at Geneva, where the diligence had deposited him on the 18th December, consumed with love, at the feet of Madame Hanska, his latest conquest<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Mme Carraud wrote him the following letter from Frapesle*

[ 69 ]

Francesle, 4th January 1834

I have had a very fleeting joy, *mon cher Honoré*, Auguste wrote me saying that a letter addressed to you had arrived at la Poudrerie, and as he took it that you would very soon be following it, he had got your room ready But alas! four days ago they sent on to me from Angoulême, a letter from Laure which shattered all my dreams You must have received by this time the two letters which came for you I don't know whether you have had the one that I wrote you from here, telling you of the loss I had sustained and how

<sup>1</sup> The story of Balzac's stay in Geneva has been told by the Vicomte de Lowenjoul in *Un Roman d'Amour* Paris, C Levy, 1896

it would affect my existence I am returning to la Poudrerie in order to take my final leave of it I have countless reasons to rejoice at going Since I left, there has been a violent scene at the neighbours', with results that were nearly fatal to the poor lady She has been in a critical condition for three days, stretched out on a mattress in her dining-room

If you are in Switzerland, I have no hopes of seeing you at Angoulême You will doubtless have innumerable things to see to when you get back to France and, for the time being, material preoccupations will outweigh all sentiment If you cannot defer to my longing to see you straight away, give ear at least to my oft repeated prayer that you will give me from the 15th May to the 15th June If you were an epicure I should not press you because, in the country, that month is not one of the best But you fall in so willingly with our simple ways that I feel sure nothing but good would result from my keen desire to show you how my little Eden has come back to life You shall have a room fitted up with everything you need The parlour, too, will be in trim, as well as the billiard-room, except for the wall-papers, which will have to stay as they are for lack of money to buy new ones I shall crave your indulgence for the rest Come then, Honoré My father's death has brought me many sorrows Apart from the severance, there have been many depressing circumstances I need a few days' contact with minds of finer texture in order to make me whole again It is therefore an act of kindness that I ask you to perform I shall be deeply grateful to you

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Inasmuch as you have been able to get away from Paris, your affairs must have been going on satisfactorily I am glad of it, *mon cher ami* May all vexatious things pass out of your existence As soon as ever I get home again, I'm going to see about getting your latest books When I read your writings, it seems to me as though you were speaking to me, and I enjoy them as though they were thoughts intended expressly for me, and the fact that I constantly see your books on my shelves has not destroyed that illusion It will therefore be for me like a fresh participation in your moral being, bringing me delights which I sorely need to restore my poise a little

Farewell, *bien cher* May 1834 turn a smiling countenance upon you and bring you all those blisses for which you long the most My own affection for you can promise you nothing more than what the previous year bestowed, but then, it will never proffer less

ZULMA

*About the end of the month, Mme Carraud, having returned to la Poudrerie, received from Balzac a very vague reply To this letter, which is now missing, she made answer as follows*

[ 70 ]

la Poudrerie, 23rd January, 1834

We have had a great fright, *mon cher Honoré* Madame Grand-Besançon had a miscarriage, with complications of so serious a nature that we were afraid we should lose her That means that I give her all my time, and you won't be angry if I have neglected a friend who is

hale and hearty, for one who is sick And now she is safe and sound again, if, that is, her people don't go trying experiments upon her In the general upset that this caused in the family, I have discovered that the tall miss has no soul, and I wouldn't now have any part in marrying her to a man who looked for anything more in marriage than someone to bear his children

In six weeks' time, I shall have said good-bye for good and all to la Poudrerie here, to fling myself into the life of the soil which is so full of variety for those who take part in it, but which looks so dull from a distance I think, *chei*, that you are rather afraid of it, for you give me a dismal *perhaps* which does not leave me very sanguine You promise me a visit, yet in the twelve long months which make up this year, you cannot pick out one for me! All the same you shall have a nice little room at Frapesle and, if you have not forgotten how its owners love you, you must surely count on getting some pleasure out of your stay I have read your two volumes Oh! *la Femme Abandonnée!* Except for an odious reflexion of Gaston's it is wholly admirable You won't often be visited by inspirations like that I am up in the skies over *La Grenadière* It is truly worthy of you So the blessed emancipation comes not, in spite of your efforts It is hateful to be always on the march and never reaching goal I want to ask you something I should be extremely pleased to have Mme de Berny here, but, not knowing her, I could not very well send her an invitation couched in suitable terms You must therefore be fond enough of me to bring her and to make her understand that my house will be as

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much a home for her as yours is I should not have cared to press her to come here, because of prying neighbours, but at Frapesle she will just be a friend of mine, and that will be that ! Tell me, Honoré, can you, and will you, do this ? You will work far more to the purpose with your good angel by your side, away from all those Paris hindrances and diversions Your room will be all ready for you by May And, let me tell you, we have rich vineyards which should be a recommendation in the eyes of a Parisian Good-bye, Honoré I am going back to my patient Courage, good health, and remembrance too !

ZULMA<sup>1</sup>

[ 70A ] [ POSTSCRIPT IN AUGUSTE BORGET'S HAND ]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have had a letter from Paris to the effect that *Eugéne Grandet* was an admirable piece of work, a sublime portrayal, with all the half-tones That's good Good that people know how to appreciate you When then, are the next instalments going to appear ? When is your *Fragoletta*<sup>2</sup> going to be finished ? Are you going straight on to Paris from Geneva ? Hasn't your return been delayed ? I shall be back at the rue Cassini at the end of the month, but I repeat I shan't be there for long I am going to Italy, and I shall stop there eighteen months I hope to come back with plenty of

<sup>1</sup> Following Mme Carraud, Borget also wrote a letter to Balzac

<sup>2</sup> He means *Séraphita* Borget had some excuse for confusing it with H de Latouche's *Fragoletta* (published 1829) for they were both of them hermaphrodites of a sort Balzac, who afterwards quarrelled with Latouche, had reviewed *Fragoletta* in the *Mercure du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, in 1829 and 1831

good studies You cannot imagine how much I hope to get out of this trip, and how enchanted I still am with my mode of work Nature, nothing but Nature for a painter You shall have the two pictures before I go, and more if you wish, so that you can compare, when I get back, and see what progress I have made At the moment I am working at a big picture Tomorrow I'm going to do a lithograph, my first It's only a trial, a study, some parts of which are not badly treated Perhaps, when I'm back in Paris, I'll do three or four more, after some sketches which I would not part with for their weight in gold, but of which one or two might go into your album, where I should always be sure to find them if I wanted them.

Adieu, dear friend Work hard and keep a place in your heart for me A B

Do me the kindness, if you have thirty francs to spare, and if it won't give you too much trouble, to buy for me at M Bonneton's, place du Palud (you can write him a line), two dozen Scotch cambric handkerchiefs at one franc twenty-five centimes each I have some of the same quality and they're very good Adieu, a good heart, and good luck to you

*Balzac, still at Geneva with Mme Hanska, replies*

[ 71 ]

Geneva, 30 January [ 1834 ]

Mon Dieu, never tax me with forgetfulness, my dearest flower of friendship I have thought, and often thought, of you, I have even spoken of you with pride,

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congratulating myself on having a second conscience in you

Will I come to Frapesle? Why, certainly! Mon Dieu, what an angel of kindness you are to have thought of her whom all my friends (I mean Borget and my sister) call my good angel. If I have not written to you, nor our Borget, the reason is that I am very little my own master here. Keep that secret at the very bottom of your heart, but I think my future is pretty well settled and that, as Borget would have it, I shall never share my crown, if crown there be. After April, yes, I shall be able to get to Frapesle.

The work I have done is nothing to the work I've still to do. *Séraphita* is a sorcerous task for the workman than any I've tackled so far. My manumission comes but slowly. The fiasco of the *Médecin de Campagne*, and *Louis Lambert* has annoyed me. But I've made up my mind. Nothing will discourage me. From next August onwards, I reckon to be free. But in August, I fancy, I shall have to be far away. Nevertheless, I shall never let a year go by without coming and occupying my room at Frapesle.

I am sorry to hear of all your troubles. I should like to feel that you were already settled in your home, and, believe me, I'm no enemy to country life, but even if you lived in a sort of hell, I should go and seek you there.

In February you'll get my second batch of *Études de Mœurs*. You were not greatly moved by my poor *Eugène Grandet*, which gives you such a true idea of provincial life. But a work that has to contain people

of every sort, and every kind of social position can, I think, hardly be taken in until it is finished It's something, twenty octavo volumes, which someday will be brought down to ten, so as to be within the reach of every purse Here, I've done two Droll Tales, and the best of the lot (*Bertha's Repentance*) would have been finished, if it had not been for a chill which has still got hold of me

One day, cara, when you are reading the ten *Dramas*, the *Études de Mœurs*, and the *Études Philosophiques* by your fireside at Frapesle, you will know how it is that I write so disconnectedly, I am dazed and oppressed with the legions of ideas that pour in upon me, I am eager for repose, and then, vexed at living like a bird on a swaying branch

Anyhow, *May and June* will be two delightful months for me, months of friendship On my sacred word they shall be yours I shall be glad when you have got away from la Poudrerie You say nothing about Ivan I hope you know well enough what it is to be sure of one's friends never again to say to me, *bear me in memory*, when there is someone here who says, 'I rejoice to know that you inspire such friendships It justifies my own for you'

Germany has bought two thousand pirated *Louis Lambert*, and France has only bought two hundred Meanwhile I am busy on *Séraphita*, a thing that is as far above *Louis Lambert* as *Louis Lambert* is above *Gaudissart* which, Borget tells me, you did not much care about We will talk it over It is said that I shall never know complete happiness, never know deliver-

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ance, freedom, anything, save in anticipation But, my dear onc, let it at least be vouchsafed me to say to you here, with all the outpourings of the tenderest of hearts, that, on this long and painful road, four noble beings have constantly stretched forth a helping hand to me, encouraged me, loved me, and felt sorrow for me, that you are one of those dear ones who hold an inalienable privilege of priority in all my affections, and that whenever I fall to summoning up remembrance of things past, rich are the memories I recall of you No, the egoism of poets and artists, is a passion for art, which leaves them a fund of powerful feelings in reserve You will always have the right to ask of me what you will, and everything I have belonging to me is yours Whensoever I dream of blissful things, you always play a part therein, and to possess your esteem is still, in my eyes, a lovelier thing than all the vanities the world can offer No, you never yield me store of your affection but I feel in my heart the longing to pay it back in even richer measure But, hapless craftsman that I am, chained to my task of word-weaving, I cannot shew you all the wealth of my devotion I am like a goat tethered to its post When will Fortune's capricious hand set me free from bondage? I know not Ah, well! Good-bye, a letter is a luxury for me Thanks for all your kindnesses Do not cease to write to me, your letters do me so much good They are not many whose approval I value, and you are one of those whose praise I care for most

You will be able to arrange your house at Frapesle as your fancy prompts, telling yourself that whatever

embellishments you cause to be made will not be taken away, and that the intimacy of your home will never be disturbed again And that is a precious thing Good-bye If only Frapesle were on my way But Frapesle is not, nor yet is Angoulême! In three days' time I shall be journeying back through dreary Burgundy to Paris, to resume my yoke of misery, after refusing, from love's hands, treasures which, in a trice, had set me free But I will have no gold but what I earn, no liberty but what I conquer for myself

I am glad to know that you will be quit of your neighbours 'Tis useless to snap your fingers at good manners, Mistress Democrat, politeness has its uses, when it detracts not from the heart's sincerity

All affectionate greetings to M Carraud, who, so far as I can make out, is coming in for his pension and doing well Won't he sleep in comfort at Frapesle!

Herewith a letter to the great Borget, who has undoubtedly won the heart of a great landed proprietor, in whose demesne he could study nature amid a hundred thousand acres of forest land But if he goes to Italy he will see these people there If he mentions his name, he will be made as much of as if he were in his own home

All my kindest remembrances, and, when my birthday comes, you know I shall be with you, as I was last year

Your affectionate friend,  
HONORÉ

*Madame Carraud straightway replies*

[ 72 ]

la Poudrerie, 8th February 1834

Truly, my dear Honoré, I needed a letter from you When my thoughts reverted to Geneva, I was far from being pleased with myself I felt something very like remorse Explain me this moral phenomenon ! Was it because I am always vexed with myself when I don't see eye to eye with you ? Nevertheless, I am vain enough to look on myself as part and parcel of your conscience I say to myself that having become cognizant of an idea, having considered it under its leading aspect, other ideas may be distorted from their true perspective Then, I do not think my tastes have been in any way affected by the prejudices of the world at large There are things about which I should not presume to lay down an opinion, clearly realizing my limitations I attach great importance to my impulses, because I put great faith in my primitive nature, which was not stunted by untimely schooling *Eugénie Grandet* pleased me greatly If she is not the seductive type of woman, she is true, devoted, as many women are, without drawing attention to herself Her spiritual awakening at the first coming of love, is true, very true I would have preferred her to marry a merely worthy man, seeing that her marriage was only a financial advantage ! The Grandet crowd, too, are true to life, with their endless to-do about the heiress, and their scandal-mongering And Nanon—admirable ! I have

<sup>1</sup> And not a real union ‘ Swear,’ said Eugénie Grandet to her husband, ‘ never to remind me of the right which marriage gives you over me ’

known servants and honest ones, who thieved for their miserly masters There are Madame Grandets in every provincial town This woman, who has given everything to a husband for whom she has but a luke-warm affection, given him her soul, who would have died a hundred deaths if she had not had a daughter, this woman, I say, is everywhere to be found One has but to live in the provinces and keep one's eyes open, to be struck by the large number of victims of this description that there are in the world Lastly, there is Grandet He it is who is not true to life To start with, he is too rich In France, no degree of thrift, of grasping and screwing would, within a space of twenty years, or even fifty, account for such a fortune Only a man's credit, not his actual tangible cash, could extend to all those millions, unless he inherited them, and even that would have to be in a country where equality of inheritance was not the rule You had no real example before you when you drew that character Again, it would be impossible for a man to amass such a quantity of gold specie in France where there is so little of it, and, above all, to do it in secret It would imply a financial revolution that would create confusion everywhere, in commercial and government circles alike As a miser, Grandet is not true to life He is a paltry, petty-minded creature A millionaire-miser who had a brain equal to grappling with such vast speculations, attending at the same time to the trivial details of his household affairs (and therein he is real enough), a miser on such a scale would never say to his wife, ' Eat that, it costs nothing ' He does not

cut the pie, he lets it go bad He only puts it on the table when it is mouldy I will put you in touch with miserly millionaires (one or two millions only) You will hear them say when I am on the point of serving some appetising dish, 'Oh, please don't start on that, keep it for another time' And you'll see how they wince when the knife goes in, and then, when the thing is handed round, how gingerly they will eat of it A typical miser is M Périolas' Uncle Robin, who goes about picking up any bits of straw he comes across, to make a manure heap, and drinks a *Hermitage* of his own growing, worth four hundred francs a cask,<sup>1</sup> so as not to have to buy *vin ordinaire* at a quarter the price Being like to die, he had himself brought down into his enormous kitchen, because, his staircase being narrow and he a man of colossal stature, it would take two men to get the coffin down Then he chose some old planks for his coffin, because his wife and children would be proud and want new ones He had it made before his eyes, and telling them to bring him the box of old nails, gave them out himself After which he departed this life, giving his wife directions about the wine-harvest, for all their money comes from *le clos de l'Hermitage* Another miser (this I saw myself) snatched away some figs which his wife had ventured to buy at a bargain, and threw them on the dung heap, so that the members of his household should not get a liking for these dainties The rest of *Eugénie*, the cousin and all that, is good, but in this

<sup>1</sup> Balzac did not turn up his nose at it either (*Les Cahiers Balzacien*, No 1, 1923)

realistic and necessarily drab portrayal of a drab existence, the foreground of the picture should not stand out so. In the provinces nothing stands out Even you, my dear aristocrat, would tarnish in the fog of such an existence. In the provinces virtues are deep-rooted, but not conspicuous People don't even know they've got them

*La Femme abandonnée*, a delicious thing, a masterpiece, has nevertheless one big blemish that has slipped your notice When Gaston gets to know that she has gone, he says to himself, 'If she loves me, etc. . . . He could neither say, nor think, such a thing, or he would be just a cold-blooded seducer No, he's in love, very much in love, and being so, he could never have applied to himself that hideous line of argument that would only occur to a hardened debauchee There are times, dear, when you overdo the intellectual side. You, the great dissector of hearts, you ought to know that the intelligence is one and indivisible and that if it displays itself in the passions, there's nothing left over for what they call mind Tranquil lives are the only lives which allow of the intelligence being applied to all things alike You who portray passion, yet feel it not, must beware of giving too much rein to your intellect. That's where you go wrong yet it does not prevent me from loving you dearly, and for that you ought to be grateful to me, for I don't care for people who are all brain That's why I loathe *Gaudissart* How could you, Honoré, you who have put us women upon such a pedestal how could you imagine that the most limited, the most ordinary of

our sex could lend her husband, stricken with the most honourable of infirmities, to serve the purposes of a piece of trickery? Next, that outburst of yours against the authors of the day made me feel ill Then you put off the man we love so dearly Whatever *Berthe la Repentie* may be like, it will not come up to *Blanche d'Azai*<sup>1</sup> It is not given to a man to be visited twice by the chaste and gracious spirit that inspired you with *Le Péché Vesnel* There's stuff in that to make a man immortal Sure of your fame in the years to come, you might lay down your pen after writing such a masterpiece That *Louis Lambert* sold but little, I can understand It appeals only to the few Then again, it had been published before But the *Médecin de Campagne*, which has but one fault, to wit, an excess of ideas, should have had a large number of readers by reason of that very fault There must be some jiggery-pokery on the part of the publishers in all that Those legal proceedings of yours did you harm, especially in the provinces If I had been with you, I should have said, 'Give the second volume to Mame for nothing and earn the right to call him a rogue' There wouldn't have been any of these hitches then Ah, well, it's done now!

How often have I wished in my dreams that I could present you with thirty thousand francs, how often has it been my great ambition! If I had had as much, I should have sent it to you, really and truly, for you could not have said me nay I, I am only your friend However, I applaud your determination not to be

<sup>1</sup> In the *Contes Drolatiques*

under an obligation to anyone for anything I am glad to think that you are going to give that ever active idea-factory a little rest You say you are going on a long journey That will refresh your mind and leave you some pleasant memories And you, a son of Paris, will never spend a year without returning thither, so we, your friends, will see you again As soon as I arrive, I am going to see to my parlour and your bedroom, and you must come and date some book of yours at Frapesle, for at Frapesle you will work Life will be easy and gentle for you there Repeat that prayer of mine to your good angel, and if she is merciful, she will come and lend an added pleasure to your stay and release you from all anxiety Read her what I say about *Eugéne Grandet* and *Gaudissart* I am quite delighted when I know that she and I are in agreement over the substance of the thing, as for its purely literary side, I realise that I am not competent to offer an opinion I have lived too serious and too lonely a life, to have had much time for studying outward forms

Carraud bids me tell you that there is a way of preventing the piracy of your books in Belgium, and that is by selling them in Brussels before you sell them in France Then, when the Belgian consignment is sold out, you would sell in France and so get the reward of your labours He will talk that over with you when we get you here I am so sure of your friendship and I know you so well, that, insignificant little person though I am, I am not afraid of criticising what you write and what you do, without the least apprehension of incurring your displeasure Our

## THE POWDER FACTORY AT ANGOULÈME

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opinions differ in all things because our worldly positions are different, and because we differ constitutionally also But all that does not affect the sentiment that one noble heart feels for another capable of understanding it All the kind and flattering things you say about me touch me and make me proud I do not reject them, because my love for you is so great that it will suffice to enable me to fulfil all that you expect of me And it is some merit in a woman, with all her shortcomings, to love with a free and unchanging affection

Frapesle will be put into order gradually, because the incomings are slender, but whatever its state, I am sure you will be comfortable there, and, as I shall receive few visitors, I am troubling little about luxuries Comfort is all I shall have and all I can have You shall inaugurate my billiard-table I am not taking the one we have here, I've ordered a new one The near prospect of freedom enables me to endure the neighbours with remarkable patience Madame has had a miscarriage, which nearly cost her her life She is now quite out of the wood, except that she does not do any walking yet

Owing to the event which saddened the end of the year for me, I am behindhand with my annual souvenir Late though it is, I know you will be pleased to have it, and don't forget that at every stitch I had a thought for you Be sure and push the screen from below up, so that the embroidered part does not rub against the inside wood, and then only wind it up as far as the embroidery of the lower part, or you would have a job

to get it down again I had not foreseen that difficulty, and I could not get another frame made here Auguste will write you presently At the moment he is under the *afflatus* of an inspiration and does not want to lay down his palette He has made marvellous progress this winter you will see Ivan is still the same good little boy, but without much energy Alas, I shall do my best, but I can't make a frail and delicate body into a strong one Carraud likes you in his way, and very much too

Adieu, caro, carissimo,

Z

*Part III*

AT FRAPESLE

1834-1849



## At Frapesle

*Balzac left Geneva on the 8th February, getting back to Paris on the night of the 11th There he found Madame Carraud's letter awaiting him, and sent a prompt reply*

[ 73 ] [ Paris 12th or 13th February 1834 ]

Mon Dieu, for a friend who knows what you put into every stitch of embroidery, what a lovely present, what a precious souvenir to give me ! Thank you a thousand times !

I can say nothing in answer to your criticisms, save that the facts are against you At Tours there's a shop-keeper, a grocer, who has eight millions, M Eynard, a mere pedlar, has twenty millions, and has had as much as thirteen millions in gold in his house In 1814, he invested it in Government Stock at fifty-six, and finished up with twenty millions All the same, in the next edition I shall knock six millions off Grandet's fortune, and when I get to Frapesle I will briefly reply to your criticisms, for which I thank you Perhaps you will see that the author's point of view is one thing, the reader's quite another But nothing can tell you how grateful I am for the motherly solicitude which your remarks reveal

Mon Dieu, cara, don't go blaming yourself for making them There is always truth in the sensations of such a great and noble soul as yours, especially when a medita-

tive solitude makes it greater still Yes, rely on it, I shall come to Frapesle and I think I shall contrive to get Madame de Berny to come too I found her so ill, when I got back here yesterday, that I became very alarmed indeed about her I am in a state of very painful anxiety Her life and mine are so wrapt up together I cannot describe, and no one can ever really know, how deep is the affection which sustains my efforts and brings constant solace to my wounded spirit You know something about that, you who are so deeply versed in the ways of friendship, you who are so affectionate, so kind As soon as I am free from this anxiety, I will write to you But meanwhile I thank you on her behalf, for what you said about our coming to Frapesle There, amid your flowers and your peaceful country life, if she needs nursing—and I make bold to hope she won't—she would regain her health and strength

Excuse this rambling letter, but I am really anxious, and I only got back last night Madame de Berny's appearance greatly worried me Another instalment of two volumes [ of the *Études de Mœurs* ] is coming out on the 25th February Let me know whether they should be sent to la Poudrerie still, or to Frapesle All kind greetings to Auguste My *Séraphita* is well ahead Kind remembrances to the Major, my congratulations to him on his retirement Kiss Ivan on the brow and keep my tenderest thoughts for yourself Adieu, you whom I forget not

Your ever affectionate  
HONORÉ

Balzac kept his promise to go and rest at Frapesle. But he came alone, without Madame de Berny, arriving early in April

From Frapesle he wrote on the 10th April to Mme Hanska in this strain My night work, my excesses, had all to be paid for I fell into such a state of exhaustion that I could not read or write, or even follow a consecutive line of argument I was as worn out in body as I was in mind This time I was not far off dying, and now for the past ten days I've been convalescing The doctor ordered me change of air, complete rest, nothing to do and plenty of nourishment So here I am for ten days or so, in Berry, with Mme de Carraud, at Issoudun [ Frapesle ]

The 21st April saw Balzac back again in Paris Meanwhile Mme Carraud, who was expecting her confinement, was suffering from exhaustion and causing her friends considerable anxiety She wrote to Honoré as follows

[ 74 ]

Frapesle, the 9th June, 1834

I am delighted to tell you, my dear Honoré, that a part of the plan you suggested to me will be put into execution next year Carraud has just signed an agreement by virtue of which he will get rid of the buildings which shut in the court opposite the farmer's house As for removing the latter and building two projecting wings we are not thinking of it, however great an improvement it might be

Even if we had not an addition to our family in prospect, which compels us to curtail our expenses, we shouldn't have been able to put down some thousands of francs, for we have not got the money put by,

and to take it out of capital would not be justifiable  
We do not think we have any right to compromise  
our children's future To count on being able to save  
it in years to come would be madness When one has  
barely sufficient to keep up the standard of living one  
has adopted, one should not count on the possibility  
of further retrenchment, except in a case of urgent  
necessity It will be quite enough to encroach on our  
capital funds for the move into Switzerland, but that  
we should do without scruple, because the children  
would reap all the advantage I could quite well have  
written you before It's more than a month now since I  
began to feel better and recovered the power to throw  
out a passing idea or two to my friends, but getting  
the house in order has been a heavy task and I've  
had no time to spare for other things Things don't  
go on very fast, for one doesn't come across decorators  
like you every day, who do everything magnificently  
However, they are putting the finishing touches on  
the billiard-room at this very moment and, except  
for the dining-room, the whole of the upstairs part  
is really in order You came too soon A fortnight ago  
our roses, millions of them, were simply intoxicating  
And now, *à propos* of that, I feel that I ought, perhaps,  
to have apologised for the rather rough-and-ready  
way I entertained you Was the consciousness of my  
very warm affection for you enough ought it to have  
been enough, to allay my misgivings on that score?  
I am very much afraid I did you a wrong in this matter,  
a wrong that arose from a foolish misapprehension  
on my part I did not know whether you relied on

me quite enough only to see in it what was really there, namely, the desire to make you comfortable Well, if you found things a little trying, I hope you are not angry with me and that you discern my true affection through it all I don't know in the least what you are doing now You are much too profitably occupied for me to expect you to acquaint me with all your exciting doings My only hope therefore is in the papers Be quick and publish something so that they may give me a long account of you Auguste is leaving us in a fortnight's time, all agog over his Italian trip, and you, too, will soon be leaving France in search of new emotional experiences Ah, how much I should like to tell you you are throwing away your life, lavishing your treasures to no purpose True, I have no right to shed tears about it, but oh, how it fills my heart to overflowing ! After all, what call have I to speak of it when a heavenly angel mourns at your side, whose tears, so tenderly dissembled, are yet not understood ! Then I can hear you saying, 'They're all conspiring to spoil my peace of mind ' And true it is that we are a trio of loving souls, very different one from another, but all staunch and unselfish Do not be angry if I, unworthy as I am, put myself on a level with her I have not been purified in the fires of suffering that she has passed through, but I feel, hour by hour, everything that thrills her bosom You wouldn't know me I've become almost merry, energetic, talkative, interesting myself in everything, seeing that everything is in order before the great day comes when I shall be taking my long rest in bed The colour in my cheeks would

make you forget my native pallor I adorn and titivate myself like a princess During the four months of its existence my little one has made such small progress that I must take the greatest care of it, so that it may gain in strength and relieve my cares Poor little thing You will never understand what it is to be a mother The privilege of motherhood makes up for all the privileges with which nature endowed you and for those many more which you have made your own For a long time I was genuinely anxious that you should marry But now I think of it no more I begin to feel some doubts If you get married I shall rejoice with you, but I shall not hasten by so much as a single wish the disturbance it would make in your habits, or accelerate the advent of an uncertain and untried happiness which is to take the place of a mode of life wholly absorbed in the pleasures of the mind

Adieu, dear heart, it is still a trouble for me to write, though it doesn't do me any real harm But I find using the pen a terrible strain on the nerves Tell Laure I am glad she has kept her good looks, and tell Madame de B that I have a profound respect for her Try, Honoré, and come, but for a longer time, so that you may rest to begin with, and go on resting

Good-bye again

[ And Borget adds a postscript ]

I shall soon be starting, Honoré Kindly bear in mind the Marquis de Salvo,<sup>1</sup> if, that is, the Marquis is willing to give letters of introduction to one who is not a

<sup>1</sup> A friend of Balzac's in Naples

Marquis Well, take care of yourself Assure Mme de Berny of my deepest gratitude

Balzac is still overwhelmed with work In August he writes saying

[ 75 ]

[ Paris, circ 15th August 1834 ]

I do not forget you, nor I! But I am working day and night, and I haven't a minute to write you Please send me a line to tell me how you are, a word or two about your health I've a letter here for Borget which I am sending to you Send it on to him, I don't know where he is

In a fortnight's time you will get two new volumes from me which have cost me something I've only two more difficulties to settle in order to be quit of all my bookselling troubles

Gosselin has washed his hands of the whole thing I am starting on the *Études Philosophiques*, they will go side by side with the *Études de Mœurs* For the one series I have Madame Béchet, for the other, a new bookseller called Werdet, neither of them will bother me I am trying to find a third one for the *Cent Contes drolatiques* When I've done that, with another six months' work, I shall be free, owing no one a page, or a penny And my copyright will be mine to do what I like with I shall have reached that oasis by a way beset with trouble and privation, of which perhaps the greatest is having sometimes been inattentive to my friends, not showing them the secrets of my heart I have thought out a big tragedy which will bring in

something handsome for my mother next year, if the proceeds come up to the level of my hopes

Such is the material portion of a life full of sentiment, a life in which you fill a great place, as you know, don't you? I have a lot of worries. Madame de Berny has had so many troubles one after another, that she is really ill. She is in the country, and I forced to remain in Paris. These words are few, but you will understand all that they convey if you have read the core of my heart, for it has both mind and core. I allow few people to get to the core. All my affection. A kiss for Ivan and a handshake for the Major.

*Mme Carraud answers*

[ 76 ]

Frapesle 15th August 1834

Forget you, my dear Honoré, and that merely because I cannot write? But don't you know that it pains me to write, that I cannot walk without pain, and that whatever movement I make is unspeakably painful? I get up more tired than I go to bed. At first that seems rather strange, but it is explained by the difficulty I have in maintaining a bearable position. In brief, I'm not good for much. I had one month when I was all right, but it was soon over. No, truly I haven't forgotten you. I hadn't forgotten that you were due to go to Italy, and for a long time you were actually there. I was in hopes your literary burdens would be lightened sooner and that so you would enjoy the return of that freedom for which we all sigh. Your letter did me a world of good. It was particularly welcome for

the reason that you are at last in sight of that oasis, as you call it, where you will breathe a lighter air and find life run on more smoothly

When that time comes, your friends will reclaim their ancient privileges and beg you to come and see them, I among others I should greatly have liked a few days of your time, for I don't know if I have any reasonable grounds for counting on any sort of future I am well enough housed now not to mind asking you here to stay But apart from my not daring to ask for a sacrifice from which I should reap the sole advantage, what you tell me about Madame de Berny's condition troubles me greatly and makes me feel I must ask no favour for myself Poor lady It is impossible to be more attached to anyone whom one only knows by intuition, than I am to her She and you are as one to me and, if I must confess it, it sometimes happens that I even put her before you You will go and see her sometimes of course?

What can I tell you about my uneventful life that could possibly interest you? I am all alone now Madame Desgrey is in Paris for two months and has left her daughter with me Her address is No 26, rue de l'Université Auguste should be at Milan by this time with his travelling companion, and may be his companion in fortune and success He was enraptured with the Jura, and it looks as if the delight had got hold of him for good I am no longer able to walk about my garden Of an evening when the moon is bright I sometimes take a turn or two along the path which now leads to the garden 'Tis my best moment And

I've still two more months to drag out like this! Nevertheless I don't want to see the end of this demi-existence Who knows what is in store for me?

Adieu, I have done more than I had strength for If you had time to write, I should ask you what has happened to Laure I got the *Médecin de Campagne* a little later than you told Auguste to expect it Was there any advantage in bringing it out in four volumes? We are beginning to get rid of some of our workmen now, and so M Carraud will have time to write to you, if I cannot Ivan is well, though I can't say his health is anything to boast of All my kindest thoughts to you I am so terrified at the idea of thinking or reading that I am making myself a slave to material affairs Howbeit, the moral part of me is still enough to guide my son's future, if I myself have to fail him

*In October, Balzac was at Saché, at M de Maigonne's There it was he started his famous Père Goriot Early in October a letter from Mme Carraud was forwarded to him there*

[ 77 ]

Frapesle, 4th October 1834

It will be a greater pleasure than ever, Honoré, to welcome you here Now that I am nearing so important, if not decisive, a crisis, I need a friend's hand to press, and I should press yours warmly I knew you were going to Touraine, but I did not think it was so soon After leaving Loches, you come to Châtillon-sur-Indre There's nothing of any particular interest along the road The Château de Pallueau, famous

in the days of the Revolution, lies between Châtillon and Busançais, and is perhaps worth while going out of your way to see Madame Desgrey and her daughter are now at Busançais and would be delighted to see you They will tell you the shortest way to get to Issoudun Myself, I only know the one that runs through Châtcauroux Don't put it off too long, and come and enjoy the last of my roses My poor garden, lately so rich in flowers, shares with me my saddened outlook on the future Nothing smiles on me now If you come in time, I shall yet have one more pleasure to count as gain Still, I have not lost my courage

Good-bye, a good journey to you, and come soon I've a pretty little room for you where you may rest quite undisturbed Carraud is glad you are coming He wants to have his fill of argument ZULMA

*Will Honoré come to Frapesle from Saché before he goes back to Paris? Once again Madame Carraud is disappointed*

[ 78 ]

Frapesle, 14th November [ 1834 ]

I have waited a long time for you, Honoré dear When Madame Desgrey came over from Villedieu, where she was staying with her cousin, I made sure I saw you in her wake But no It was another grief, added to the many that have invaded me I thought I was never going to see you again, and I lamented that I had not taken a fonder leave of you I was so ill, so downhearted, that the little strength of any kind that remained to me, hardly enabled me to receive these guests of mine who had promised to give me a few

weeks of their society I could not write According to my calculations, I was some days over my time and as I have usually been before it, the interval between the time I had fixed in my own mind for the confinement and the time it actually occurred, was almost unbearable, and you can't imagine what an effort it was to me to hide my anxiety from my husband so as not to make him anxious too

All this explains why I haven't written, and you won't be angry with me We talked of you every day Suddenly we should hear a noise. We thought at once it was you arriving, and for a moment or two we were all excitement At last you wrote and said we were not to expect you The spring<sup>1</sup>! That's a long way off, especially with Austria in between<sup>1</sup> However, winter is come, and I only want you when the flowers are here I am not good to look upon save in the sun and flower-time Besides, my little Yorick<sup>2</sup> would bore you In four or five months' time, he will be living his own life For two days I lamented that I had another boy, but I got over that and now I ensconce myself in the thought that I am called upon to fulfil a task, difficult indeed, but worthy, the task of moulding a pair of men I shall not quail in the face of such grave obligations and no sacrifice will be a hardship to me Henceforth I fling aside whatever I had garnered of a life so quiet, so pensive, and so sad No, I efface all thoughts of self completely in this new-born child I should have

<sup>1</sup> A projected journey to Vienna where Madame Hanska was staying, a project carried out in May-June, 1835

<sup>2</sup> Yorick, born 29th October, 1834

reproduced myself to perfection in a daughter My sons ask more than that by far, and I will give them my all You, dear Honoré, you have your work, tasks you must fulfil, yet, with all that, you have time enough to add to your stores of fancy and caprice That, no doubt, comes of possessing an exuberant constitution Myself, I am wholly taken up with my children, and there only remains the outward life, all tastes discarded, all passion spent, with barely any thoughts unless it be for something that may benefit the children either now or in the future Madame Desgrey is going back to Paris I shall be alone, and a winter spent thus promises me a pleasure that I have long yearned for You could not conceive such a thing, you, four months with no distractions, with not so much as a glimpse of a fresh face Well, I revel in the thought of this delectable winter Yet I, who desire neither wealth, nor greatness, nor luxury, must have a thorn in my material existence 'Tis this Frapesle is too near the town We could remedy that by taking away the bridge, but that the Master will not allow

I got your third number shortly after you announced it *La Maison Claes*<sup>1</sup> greatly delighted me People will complain that you don't take enough account of the material difficulties of life, and they will be quite right But in my eyes that is a small thing compared with its great, pervading, devouring, all consuming idea Madame Claes is admirable, not quite motherly enough,

<sup>1</sup> It came out in 1834 in vol III of the *Scènes de la Vie Privée* (*Études de Mœurs au XIXe siècle*, vol III) Paris, Veuve Béchet 8vo

but she loved Nothing can stand against passion, whatever that passion be. May heaven keep us free of it !

What are you doing now? And those *Droll Tales* those witty things that will outlive everything? Are you letting them slide? I am getting rusty here. When my head is a little stronger I am going to take up grammar, so as to be able to cope with Ivan. I don't want to leave him to books for another four years from now. I mean, of course, books to get up by heart.

I live only on the things you write, and on the memory of my friends.

Auguste is in Naples. Rome had no charms for him. He was enchanted with Venice and, if his friend had agreed, he would be there still. He assures me of his unwearying zeal, and it is a fact that he's got to work, for he is spending some of his capital to pay for these travels.

Adieu, may all earthly joys be rained upon you. You are too old, or too young, for the heavenly ones. Perhaps from next year onwards we shall winter in Paris. There I shall see you. I am thinking. Adieu my tenderest affection.

*The year 1834 ended, like the previous ones, with super-human labours. On the 14th December, Balzac began to bring out Père Goriot in the Revue de Paris, and set about preparing the Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées. The 25th he wrote to Madame Carraud in these terms*

[ 79 ]

[ Paris, le ] 25 December 1834

I wanted to send you, in default of a letter, for I haven't a moment to call my own, a nice armchair

against the day when you got up from your bed of pain, so that I might bring myself before you with a tangible memento and contribute little by little to the completion of your little pink withdrawing-room But the miserable wretch of an upholsterer was worthy of me He is so busy that my poor armchair will not arrive till New Year's Day It will tell you that, though my time is filled to overflowing with ink and proofs, I think of you and love you none the less My heart is just the same

How is this? Borget hasn't written me a line!

A kiss for Yorick on the brow, for God knows how I love these dear little creatures now! I wish you all that you desire, I wish you what is never wholly mine—happiness! A thousand loving things for Ivan, a grasp of the hand for the Major, and I beg you will suffer me to kiss you on the brow with a thousand tender and affectionate wishes May your days be good and pleasant Never has the torrent that bears me onward been more swift Never has a work more terrible in its majesty commanded human mind I go, I go to my labours as a man goes forth to his sport I sleep five hours, no more I work eighteen I shall drop when I reach the goal But the thought of you refreshes me, ever and anon I am buying La Grenadière<sup>1</sup> and paying off my debts It will take me, at a reasonable estimate, still another year to get quite clear But the joy of owing nothing to anybody, is no longer an empty

<sup>1</sup> At Saint-Cyr, near Tours La Grenadière is described in the story that bears its name See also *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, 1, 213, 237, 238, 244, 304, 305

dream An article in the *Revue* like the *Mémoires d'une Jeune Mariée*, which is coming out in February 1835, brings me in eight thousand francs If only my fame be not mere repute, that repute a vogue and that vogue a transitory one !

Adieu I was going to write you just a line or two, and now I've filled a whole sheet All my love Write to me, be generous Don't be vexed with me about things You don't know how I deplore this feverish existence, at times But how am I to jump clear of the chariot?

Your ever affectionate

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

*Early in January, 1835, Boget returned to France and went to Fraplesle He was staying there with Madame Carraud when he received this letter from Balzac*

[ 80 ]

[ Paris, about 1st March 1835 ]

MY GOOD FRIEND,

I never got your letter from Venice So much for that

As regards money, if you want some immediately, let me know at once and I'll send you on what you need, if it's urgent If not I will let you have what I owe you in April, as I have six thousand francs to pay this month I shall be rich in 1836 1835 is still full of secret difficulties though it looks brilliant enough on the outside My dear Auguste, the world was bent on invading me I therefore took an axe and laid low everything round about me In three days' time I am disappearing into a

cell accessible to no one, not even to my family I hold you too deeply in my heart not to let *you* in Tell me what day you are coming You will be perfectly snug, whether you are in my monastery or in the rue Cassini

Madame de B[erny] is suffering from an incurable complaint, an aneurism of the heart She cannot recover, and my life is stricken at its very root If this heavenly radiance is taken from me, every day will grow dimmer for me She is, as you know, my conscience and my strength She is high above all, like the sky, like the spirit of faith, of hope I don't know what will become of me She doesn't know what her illness is, but she knows only too well that she is dying She is obliged to take digitalis to moderate the circulation of the blood Every day is full of sorrow for me, but no one is in the secret My grief cannot be realized It is in my very life Instead of seeing clear, and being strong I shall be bereft of light and courage without her Who, or what, has killed this glorious creature? Grief, my friend The madness and death of her daughter, and a number of other things, one on top of another (burn this letter), I have known all her sorrows, I have felt them as if they had been my own Her two sons and I watch over her with dutiful affection Oh! my good Auguste, my eyes are full of tears as I write 'Twas for her I was weaving, tress by tress, and leaf by leaf, the crown which will never be for anyone save her For her it was that I longed for fame, for her that I was ambitious and hungered for renown She has never known what she was to me, and now to tell her would

be to kill her To read a fine page of mine causes her more emotion than she can bear. The dying moments of *Père Goriot*, the latest branch added to the crown of laurel, nearly brought on a disastrous crisis She must live in perfect quiet, no shocks, no emotions. As she says herself, she were better dead My friend, God has burdened me with mighty sorrows To give her the joy of seeing me quit of them I have toiled unstintingly this year Three times I nearly went under from excess of work Ah well, the goal is six months farther off than I thought I have marched onward with giant strides, but that was not enough I am shutting myself up because of the gulf I've got to fill, and because I want to give Mine de B[erny] the joy of knowing that I am a free man.

Mon Dieu ! I have never put so much into a mere letter. I cannot write to anyone but to her, and to the one in Germany, but Germany is often wrong<sup>1</sup>

Yes, I shall be in Paris when you come, but let me know definitely the date of your arrival Tell Madame Carraud not to be any angrier with me than she would be with a soldier on campaign I can attend to nothing but my work, and as to my friends, I can do no more for them than to bear them in my thoughts She must know all that; my credit will have to be extended till 1837 My great work will bring me absolution I long to hear you tell me all about yourself and Italy When you are in Paris, I will give you two spells, first, in the morning, when I go for my walk from eight to

<sup>1</sup> Germany, that is to say Austria Madame Hanska was staying in Vienna.

nine o'clock, the second in the evening during my dinner hour, from five to six

I have had a lot of trouble There have been money worries, but these are nothing, but I've had family worries My brother<sup>1</sup> is back from India unhappily married, and penniless Well, I must say good-bye Count on me for everything Your pluck and industry delight me Come, your hand! And I shall trust you to tell the folk at Frapesle all the love I bear them in my heart

*Borget came to Paris with young Ivan, whom Mme Carraud had entrusted with the following letter for Balzac*

[ 81 ]

Francesle

My little Ivan will be handing you this letter Auguste is taking him to Paris, so as to enjoy the youngster's wonderment and delight at the sight of so many marvels I doubt not he will bring home some of the friendly smiles you will be lavishing on him You are sad, Auguste tells me, your life does not bring you satisfaction Your guardian angel is sick That lady is one of Auguste's special cults, and he is very upset to learn that she is ill Shall I then never see you with a mind at rest? How is it that with so much to make you happy, happiness cannot be persuaded to settle down with you? Your constant vexations have disenchanted me

<sup>1</sup> Henry François de Balzac (1807-1855), chartered surveyor, who died destitute in the hospital at Mayotte In 1832 he married Marie Françoise Balan, fifteen years his senior, the widow of a captain in the Merchant Service called Dupont

with Paris life I should only embrace it with reluctance and from some unavoidable necessity Everything must dissolve in a furnace fiercer than Hell itself Am I never to see you settled in at La Grenadière, since that is your earthly paradise? I put great faith in the influence of a simple and uneventful life on a temperament and a talent such as yours No constitution can cope with such a constant ebullition, and yours, exceptional though it be, will be ruined by it, and I cannot allow that you have the right to hasten its destruction You wrote that you were entering into possession of your hermitage this year Make haste then and get settled in, and don't think about improvements for years to come Moreover, you have made the place so celebrated that I doubt whether you ought to be allowed to lay a profane hand on it and mar its general aspect The chosen few whom you admit into this sanctuary will demand that it should remain the same as when the unknown lady knew and loved it How glad I shall be when I get a letter from you dated from Tours Don't worry, if you find it impossible to write to me, and don't be angry with me if I too am silent The arrival of Yorick has greatly complicated my life Then, my poor health compelled me to leave a variety of things undone last year and there are many duties I am bound to attend to Another thing is that my husband cannot easily get about, and I often have to deputise for him I really don't like asking you to come and see me I can't help remembering the shoddy welcome which I involuntarily gave you last time, and I should perhaps be doing you anything but a kindness

in asking you to try my hospitality again I feel, too, that, strangers as we have become to everything that now engrosses you, it would give you little pleasure to be with us, and all the benefit would be on our side All the same, I have a very quiet little room for you

If ever you had a wish to see Italy, Auguste is the man to cure you of it He is really too depressing by half about it According to him you would have done well not to go to Rome, especially to see Saint Peter's I am almost inclined to think it's a good thing to be so phlegmatic and matter-of-fact Life as it advances, does not spend itself so ruinously If you've any time to spare, I wish you would tell me what you think about Ivan His distaste for work is really painful Is he always going to be like this? <sup>1</sup> I am really much worried about him I am afraid he will prove to be one of those intelligent children who never do anything, and nothing would grieve me more than to see the first of Heaven's gifts thus thrown away But you are so much engaged that you'll have no time to give an eye to the young man My last little one has a prodigiously knowing eye, but, for the rest, he is no beauty God does well in all His works, for, if Yorick had been a girl, his enormous mouth would have been a grief to me, and his fine forehead would not have sufficed to set my mind at rest, for what's a plain woman good for? less than nothing at all!

<sup>1</sup> M. Ivan Carraud became Inspecteur Général des Eaux et Forêts, Officier of the Legion of Honour He died on the 11th September, 1881

My poor Honoré, I scarcely know what I am saying to you I have a sore throat and a bad head, and my wits are not my own Forgive me There were heaps of things I wanted to tell you, but I really cannot I hardly know what letters I am putting down Good-bye If you are in trouble, take refuge in those friendly hearts that are always open for you

*Balzac makes no reply till the 17th April He is over-worked and ill and tells his fair friend that his great desire is to go and refresh himself in the good country air.*

[ 82 ] [ Paris ] Good Friday [ 17 April 1835 ]

Perhaps you will be seeing me in a few days, and Borget won't be able to say that I am lost to my friends The excessive work which the final chapters of *Séraphita* have entailed has given me neuralgia in the left side of my head For three days now the pain has been incessant All I can say is that sometimes it is less and sometimes greater than at others What, I think, I shall have to do will be to have a change of air and give up work for a time, which is exceedingly tiresome, for I've got to get through the work and time is all-important

As soon as I have published *Séraphita* I shall go and take ten days off in the Frapesle region Anyhow that's what I hope to do, for I am subject to so many tyrannical circumstances that I cannot say definitely and certainly, 'I shall do this,' or 'I shall do that'

There are, in me, several men. The financier, the artist at strife with the newspapers and the public,

then the artist at grips with his labours and his subjects, lastly there is the man of passion who flings himself on his knees to worship a flower, who admires its colours, and breathes-in its perfumes Here you will exclaim, 'That humbug Honoré!' No, no, I don't deserve that epithet, you would think it very fine of me if you knew how I cut myself off from every pleasure that offers, and shut myself up to get on with my work

Come, dear, why don't you write to me oftener? Do you imagine you have declined the least little bit in my affection? The greater our experience of life, the more our old friendships grow upon us

And so you will be seeing me in a few days It's an adventure I've been cherishing delightedly for some time now But also, some days since, I fell under the sway of a very engaging person, and how to escape I know not, for I am like any weak girl, unable to resist the things that tempt me

Well, good-bye for the present I shall come and take possession of that little room which I am burning to inhabit, for, and this is the solemn truth, I am longing for a week or two of complete repose, and that I've only had at your house There will be a good deal of the selfish element in my visit *Mon Dieu*, I get no news of you now You leave me in the lurch Laure is suffering from some terrible female complaint To get right again, she will need six months' treatment and six months' patience Poor Laure! And I've got some dreadful worries Henry is a cause for tears, we are in despair about him That is in confidence, between you and me Take good care of yourself Keep Borget up to it

about his scheme for study and work Sweet greetings for your children Kiss them both for me I wish I could bring them luck that way. All kind wishes to you and M. Caraуд. Let me know whether M. Périolas is going to be at Bourges for a bit longer. I've got to spend a week there. to get to know the place.

*Forthwith Madame Carraud replies.*

[ 83 ]

I don't write to you these days. that's true. Why not? I think about you. talk about you, and should like to put myself into touch with you I could find the time well enough. though I have very little leisure.

How comes it then that I have not submitted a single idea to you, much as I love you? I have often started a letter and left it unfinished I don't know how to finish them I have been seriously enquiring into the causes of this non-friendly phenomenon and I have come to the painful conclusion that we are following two essentially divergent lines and that in time we shall come to view one another only from afar. unless you can manage to come and see me sometimes My poor Honoré. I feel that do what I will. I am growing more and more materialistic. I am undergoing the influence of my environment The general vulgarity of tone is spreading over me like a grease stain. and I can find no remedy against it. Whatever is common in manner and expression still continues to revolt me. and irritates me to a high degree. but I foresee with alarm that the time will come, all too soon. when I shall be bearing

it with philosophic patience in order to recapture a little of that freedom of mind which I need so sorcely and which this unremitting torture deprives me of I hope to save my sentiments from the shipwreck and for that reason I seldom proclaim them I have lost the habit of good conversation I abhor merely talking about facts, and such facts, bon Dieu! The people who live in Issoudun and the people about me here refuse to discuss a general idea Add to that the dearth of reading-matter and you will see that my ultimate cretinization is inevitable My son is the only one with whom I talk now and again, and who makes me thoughtful about his future The long trial which, every day, adds another wrinkle to my eyelids would be a study worthy of him who portrayed *La Femme de trente ans* But could all these secrets of the heart be laid bare? These things are sacred The mere mention of them would almost cause them to dissolve And God has denied me a daughter! Oh, if only I had a girl of fourteen, what a woman I would make of her and how I would impress her with the need for intellectual intercourse

I welcome, as a sacred promise, the hope that you give me of coming I have need of the sight of you It would be like a spiritual regeneration for me Those eight or ten days you devote to me will feed that hunger for things of the mind which is not yet extinct in me My poor dear, if it was but a vague project, bring it to pass for Charity's sake, for we are bound to do what good we can in this world It is not the artist I would dare entreat I am fain rather to beseech

'the man of passion' He will have compassion on me, seeing that he can enjoy the beauty of a flower I have one beneath my eyes which often sets me dreaming, it is a primula, a modest flower which seems to breathe the promise of another life Have a primula, then, in front of you when you are writing Its scent will bring you peace I have nothing left now of poetry in my life but flowers, by the same token, nothing on earth will ever make me give them up, particularly as wild flowers delight me as much as those that are the hardest to obtain

Ah, me! Yes, I do sometimes say 'That rogue of an Honoré' and I bless the tasks which prevent you from surfeiting yourself with pleasures, for I think, dear, that you manage to enjoy yourself pretty well as it is Not that I would presume to strike a balance between those pleasures and the trials that beset you For me, a pleasure never makes up for anything, and grief always inflicts a wound the mark of which abides for ever But a surfeit of joy polishes the soul, and polished surfaces reflect everything, but they are icy to the touch I offer up a silent prayer to this engaging creature who can thus absorb you so completely Tell her the parable of the wicked rich man, and bid her suffer others to gather up the crumbs which she lets fall I have had your bed made up this morning, as a gage of your coming You will be in Bœotia and your brains shall slumber all they will I am expecting M Périolas to-morrow You ought to come when he is here, and you could go back to Bourges together I undertake to see that Carraud shall not worry you

too much Auguste is working away furiously, and keeps completely to himself We only see him at meal times You will see my Yorick, and you shall breathe on his forehead so as to thaw his brains There's never a child so good as he is He has never been peevish with a soul

I am greatly distressed at what you tell me about Laure A female complaint at her age! It's dreadful Tell her she must be very patient and adhere strictly to the treatment prescribed The least departure from it might have grave and irreparable consequences Assure her of my unfailing love I had hoped that your brother, having put half the globe between himself and his family, would give them no more trouble What evil chance has brought him back to France? Your poor mother! How she must bewail the caresses she showered on such a son! What, after all, is life, Honoré, that we should strive so hard to lend it brilliance and adornment? Has it not, even for its favourites, a cruel thorn which awakens a longing for better things? I tell you, if I had no children, I should not wish to live One must have an over-ruling motive, a transcending duty, to enable one to bear so many trials One has to go back to the primary wellspring to enable one to teach these little ones, who are yet as nought, to bear more patiently the burthen of this life, and bravely to endure its consequences I take care of myself, yet with never a thought of self The day my own self came in view, I should fervently pray for death I hope I shall never sink so low as that I have the spirit of my own good father He died at eighty-two and

never heard the call of self, and so we adored him  
He was not of this world, and the world spoke evil  
of him for the world never had the key to his actions

Good-bye, but not for long, please God ! You won't  
find anything of me left next year 'Twill all be effaced,  
destroyed

*Yet another disappointment Balzac neither comes nor  
writes Madame Carraud resumes her pen*

[ 84 ]

Frapesle, 17th May [ 1835 ]

Well then, dear, so you have let our lilacs fade !  
The roses are in bloom Will you let them too depart  
and never see them ? There is rest here, in our garden  
walks If you are tired out with all your labours, come  
to Frapesle In a day you'll be yourself again There is  
in our air something eminently calm and refreshing,  
and since it is not inspiration that you seek from me,  
you will lack for nothing And then I've one of my  
brothers <sup>1</sup> here His originality will please you Come,  
then, if only for a week I've said already, ' If you go  
on putting years between your visits, you won't  
find anything left at all ' I've got your books I found  
*La Transaction* again my jewel 'Tis one of the flowers  
in your crown that smells the sweetest, to my taste  
I can't make much of *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or* I am  
doubtless too provincial for that, then again, eternally  
absorbed as I am with a single thought, it takes something  
very poignant to have any effect on me I am afraid

<sup>1</sup> No doubt Silas Tourangin, born 1790, an army officer, six  
years older than his sister Zulma

that books concerned merely with ideas would leave me unmoved This is, of course, a real decline, and yet, my dear Honoré, I am not the least envious of the 'exorbitant' life, as you call it, which they lead in Paris I never find myself for a moment hankering after that life of luxury and intellectual brilliance All the same, I have intellectual needs which are not satisfied by the people with whom I live, who refuse to use their minds with a pertinacity that would suffice to bring masterpieces into being Bring your mind to bear on that, you subtle analyst of the human heart, tell me how it is that men, men who are still young, are quite content to remain as they are, wrapped up in a round of common things, and proceed to denounce the thirst for knowledge and ideas which torments every being who understands the end for which he was created My poor Honoré, if heaven had not given me sons to bring up, on whom I have staked my all, I verily believe—this in your ear!—that I shouldn't want to live any longer, for I am not free enough to do everything I want to do If it were not so, solitude, so far as I myself am concerned, would suit me extremely well You are very lucky, you You have plenty of intellectual pabulum, apart from what you derive from your own stock If to that you can add some suitable new friendship and not have to go looking for it three hundred miles away, your lot is a happy one, and you alone spoil it I hear nothing now of Laure After making many attempts to link up with me again, she didn't feel equal to keeping up the attempt any longer All the same, I have the kindest recollections

of her. You don't say any more about marriage? Do you feel as if you could face growing old alone? Have you never felt that you would like the daily companionship of a child? If, in the midst of your dazzling successes, you were suddenly to become conscious of a void. . . . Make haste, and don't wait until you're forty. There are no wives for men of that age. Widows are so rare in France!

Come now, make up your mind to vegetate with us a little. We live very much to ourselves, and you shan't be bothered by anything or anybody. We are all very fond of you: that might help you to forgo the attractions of Chaillot.<sup>1</sup> Talking of that, there are lots of things I could tell you, even if I only mentioned some of the ideas I have had on this subject. But first of all I should like to know what distance this year has put between us, for, my affection not being altered by circumstances, I should not like to disturb your usual mode of life, and were you feminised to the last degree, I am sure I could discern behind the muslin and the cashmirs and the bronzes, the real, the natural Balzac of the good and kindly heart. Good-bye. To-day's dose of electricity is working in every part of me and only leaves me with a host of vague, half-formed ideas, so active is the vibration it sends through me. Keep well, and above all, keep kindly disposed towards your friends. See to it that your friendship for them does not pass into the limbo of those honourable traditions which are so piously handed down in families.

<sup>1</sup> The rooms in the rue des Batailles where Balzac lived from 1825-1838 under the name of Mme Veuve Durand

from one generation to another Ivan cannot believe that you should deign to think of him Carraud opens one eye and shifts himself a little, to tell me to remember him to you Good-bye

*Mme Carraud's letter went a long way round before it reached its destination, for, since the 12th May, the Marquis de Balzac had been installed in the Hôtel de la Poire, Vienna, with his manservant and his trunks emblazoned with the arms of the d'Entraigues*

*After spending a month in Vienna, the novelist returned to Paris, whence he wrote to Mme Carraud*

[ 85 ]

Paris about 12th June 1835

It is impossible for me to come until I've finished *Séraphita* I will send you a line a few days before my arrival Affectionate remembrances to you and Borget A kiss for Ivan and a handshake for the Major

*Not at all satisfied with this, Madame Carraud wrote back as follows*

[ 86 ]

Frapesle 10th July 1835

It is now nearly a year that you have been palming us off with the hopes of seeing you You have no pity You have no idea of the suspense in which you leave us

As soon as ever spring began to smile on us, I counted on your coming to enjoy my flowering trees Later, I hoped you would come and be stifled with the scent of my magnificent lilacs, lastly I wanted you to admire my roses But off you went, rushing up and down the

world, never remembering that Frapesle is part of it You write that you are coming soon, and no sooner have we come to look with certainty on your arrival than you shatter our happiness to fragments 'Tis not good, dear Honoré If old friendships ever grew threadbare, I should tell you you were imprudent, but ten years hence, no less than to-day, you will still be welcomed with delight Do, then, according to your own good pleasure

We have just suffered a cruel blow My eldest brother has died suddenly This breaking of family ties is always a sad thing To lose a loved one, at an age when one makes no fresh ties, leaves a great blank This personal grief of my own does not prevent me from entering into the sorrows of others and trying to relieve them You, perhaps, may be able to assist a poor young man, and rescue him from the blank despair into which he has fallen He is the son of a highly respectable independent gentleman of our town whom, up to the present, I have only known by name Contrary to his father's wishes, this young man has embarked on a literary career He spent some years in Paris, whence he was driven by extreme penury As his father has declined to go on paying his expenses, he has written to me imploring my assistance to help him out of his difficulty, and to procure him the wherewithal to get his manuscripts published I asked him to come and see me, and, notwithstanding his extreme shyness, I was able to form an idea of his abilities, which, though they need development, are already considerable I see no other way of helping him than to try and put

him back into the centre of that hotbed of ideas which acts so potently on those who would seek in it their means of livelihood But it's useless going to Paris unless you can support yourself there This young man has few requirements, and told me that he would be quite happy on thirty sous a day Can't you, with all the important people you know, get him a post as secretary? That would provide him with the means of subsistence He's not looking for a big salary Then he would have enough time to himself to pursue his literary career, which he is most anxious to do Moreover, a position of that kind would enable him to see a little of the social world, which is at present a closed book to him His ignorance is bound to make him perpetrate blunders innumerable in his novels He has a very engaging exterior, and, though shy, is not awkward He knows how to write He has a slight 'Berrichon' accent, but he talks well The unhappy young man is in a condition of such profound discouragement that I should not wonder if he ended by committing suicide That would be the death of his good mother Judge of the value of the service that I ask of you He has such modest pretensions, this poor young man, that the tiniest salary would suffice him Once he managed to get two or three books published, or a few articles accepted in some little paper, he would be able to support himself, however commonplace his books might be, for it is not given to everyone to write a *Colonel Chabert* I have read that book twice to different guests, and each time they were stirred to their inmost being You are surely generous enough to

stretch forth a helping hand to one who wants to get on, and whom neither the difficulties of the way, nor want in all its gaunt repulsiveness, have availed to discourage

You don't know my little Yorick Such an immature little thing as that offers little interest to the great explorer of the human heart, but the joy it would give me should be of some account to you

Has it ever occurred to you to depict sorrow and its effects on the mind of the ordinary individual? I made a melancholy study of it beside my poor brother's dead body When you come I will tell you all about it, and how interests of a practical nature at once prevailed, though the grief was real and profound But with people who have always been chiefly concerned with material things, sentiment soon gives way to the practical exigences of life Good-bye, Honoré, this sad bereavement necessitates a great deal of correspondence between my brothers and sisters and myself, for I am their only representative here

Do what you can for my protégé, and I will bless you from the bottom of my heart Come what may, I shall always love you dearly As your time is precious, send me a line, no more, if you find anything Don't include me and my affairs among the things that *have* to be attended to. I flatter myself that I am in a higher category than that Friendship, in my case, can live without such crumbs as that and, even if you made no sign for twenty years, would lay its treasures at your feet with undiminished faith and all the old *abandon*

Adieu, are you never going to see the room that I have ready for you?

*Balzac very soon replies*

[ 87 ] [ Paris between the 10th and 28th July, 1835 ]

Yes, I will do what I can for your young protégé  
But I shall have to see him, for I should want him for  
myself, and, under my wing, there's a small fortune  
to be made in picking up the crumbs A score of  
times I've had to close my door to well-intentioned  
folk But I will come to Issoudun first of all to explain  
things and see the man My journey will be subject  
to my getting ten days' quiet Don't find fault with me  
I am overwhelmed with work, and you cannot judge  
me all that long way off I have to correct twenty proofs  
a day Every minute there is someone going or coming  
from the printers I have three Reviews<sup>1</sup> on my hands,  
as well as my two publishers who, between them,  
have three instalments in the Press<sup>2</sup> I have fifteen  
thousand francs to pay two months from now, and my  
all-mighty pen has got to beat them up All kind  
thoughts to everyone

HONORÉ

I can't come and see you till I have finished off three  
or four jobs which I've got on hand I shall certainly  
come and plant a kiss on Yorick's brow to indue him,  
as I trust, with the energy and steadfastness of your  
friend

HONORÉ

I'm only answering the urgent portion of your letter

<sup>1</sup> *Revue de Paris* end of *Séraphita*, *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées*, *Revue des Deux Mondes* *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, *Le Conservateur* a proposed royalist composition

<sup>2</sup> Mme Veuve Béchet, *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne* Vol 1, Werdet,  
*Études philosophiques* (4th Edition)

*Balzac's promise remained unfulfilled Mine Carraud became impatient and sends him her young protégé armed with the following letter*

[ 88 ]

Frapesle, 28th July [ 1835 ]

HONORÉ,

It is my *protégé*, M. Émile Chevalet,<sup>1</sup> who will hand you this letter in person; do you hear? I know, Monseigneur, that you are inaccessible, but I do myself the honour to believe that I am excepted from this rule of exclusion, and I invest M. Chevalet with my privileges, for he is my *protégé* and you know, dear, that I never do anything by halves. Receive him, then, and judge him with indulgence, for he does not know how to make the most of himself. But I go bail for him, and you accept me in that capacity, I think. This, then, is what I ask you to do. First of all try and get him a post. You know how hard it is for a man of ideas to have to be continually fighting for the material necessities of life, when he hasn't a penny, and how it hinders the development of his gifts. Poor young man, he's not ambitious. He only wants to be able to live without being constantly worried about ways and means, and to have a few hours every day for writing. Speak about him a little to a few publishers. The fact that you have taken him up ought to suffice. And lastly, if he could get some articles taken by some small paper he would get himself known and in that way promptly acquire a measure of independence which would enable him to stand on his own feet and be under an obligation

<sup>1</sup> Émile Chevalet died a member of the War Office Staff

to no one Am I not really too importunate, Honoré? Well, you see, it's like this when I saw this young man's life blighted, broken, almost brought to an untimely end, I felt completely upset I should have liked to set him on his feet again, there and then I thought of you because, so far as I am concerned, you are a great deal more than a famous man set high on a pedestal, you are a good and kindly man, and I said that your sympathy and help would never fail me Do but one of these things, if the three together are too difficult, just one and I shall call down blessings upon you for turning aside a moment on your road to do a kindness for my sake

I hardly look to see you any more Fame and its consequences have taken possession of you May this make you happy But you have ceased to talk of marriage Have you given up the idea? Or is the author of the celebrated *Physiologie* waiting till he is forty before he takes some sylph-like maiden for his wife?

Adieu, dear friend, adieu For you the perfumes of friendship and true regard which I trust will reach you untainted by those of flattery, and gentler I rely on you for all that concerns my protégé, whose fate touches me as keenly as anything on earth ZULMA

Balzac at last fulfilled his promise At the end of July he left Paris for Frapesle, where he was eagerly awaited But his stay was brief, lasting only about a week, and on the morning of Sunday the 9th August, he passed through Bourges, where his friend Périolas was in garrison, and

returned to his work Madame Carraud prolonged her stay in Bourges so as to be with her ailing sister, Mme de Lapparent Writing to Balzac a few days later she said

[ 89 ]

Bourges, 13 August, 1835

MY DEAR HONORÉ,

I have received the young man's reply to the questions I put him, and I am prepared to stake my soul upon him If I am wrong, I shall never believe in anything or anybody again, not even in myself I believe then that you can put the completest confidence in him He is not very communicative, and that ought to suit you Will he be equal to doing what you want him to do? That's the only question to which I cannot give a definite reply Only, this I will say, he writes a better letter than any I have read up to now He has let me see his first work, written when he was seventeen It gives me great hopes for his future Give him a trial However short a time you keep him, you will be doing me a great service And if, after a short time, you give up hopes of ever making him into what you want, part friends, and don't lose interest in him What I'm trying to do is to re-fashion a spoilt life, and since, unaided, I can do nothing, I am asking my friends to help me I think it is a good work that I am doing and I rely on you to help me So please be kind and write and ask him to come and see you, and try and fix something up You know he has nothing, absolutely nothing, and he must live somehow or other, even if it's only keeping body and soul together Every

month must bring him his little wage, for those who have nothing can't afford to wait

I am still at Bourges Every morning M Périolas takes me for a drive until lunch-time My dear, you really must come to Bourges and explore it thoroughly It's worth it You who have written such a lot about Louis le Unzième<sup>1</sup> haven't even had the curiosity to visit the house where he was born<sup>2</sup> It is extraordinarily interesting It is at present used as a Charity School It has a vast chimney-piece which would be the envy of all who love the Middle Ages if they knew about it You absolutely must see Bourges We will go back there together You will invest the whole place with the hues of your marvellous imagination and I will warm myself by your fire, I whose day is over

God only knows how long we are to be separated, for you belong to me so little that there's no relying on you at all It must be a wonderful thing to be made much of like this If it does not interfere with the peace and happiness of one's old days, you are one of the earth's elect Your visit did me a lot of good, Honoré I was able to open my heart a little, and with you that is not painful because a word or two suffices to reveal its very depths Let me have a word from you if you have time, and pray that I may have the courage to

<sup>1</sup> *Le Louis Onze* She is referring to two Rabelaisian stories, *Joyeulsetez du bon roi*, and the adventure of *Maître Cornélius*

<sup>2</sup> The 3rd July, 1423, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon in a room of the former Archbishop's Palace at Bourges, hung with Cyprian cloth-of-gold shot with crimson

bear up Dear, I shall never go to Paris The burden grows heavier, and instead of becoming stronger as time goes on, I feel more weak, and therefore less able to accommodate myself to circumstances and to turn them to account I have a forthright nature, and it is almost a drawback Fortunately my sons will be the better for it, and they are all I have left to me in the world

Adieu, my poor tormented one ! When will your tranquil days arrive ? I can only write at night here, and I am very tired Think of me with affection when time permits Do something for my poor protégé You will be doing me a personal favour. I say again that I attach the utmost importance to his finding a place

I still have my cough, I return to Fraplesle on the morning of the 14th My sister is having me brought back Courage and good health *Le Lys* is finished, no doubt?

*In spite of all his affection for Madame Carraud, Balzac is unable to encourage the literary ambitions of her young protégé He tells her the definite and cogent reasons*

[ 90 ] [ Paris, between 14th and 25th August 1835 ]

Before your protégé can earn fifteen hundred francs a year, he's got ten years' work in front of him He knows nothing about the language, or how to use it, or anything It is sad to see people who cannot write a sentence, and have not a single idea, flinging themselves into literature, imagining a desire is the same thing as

a vocation. The skill to write is not passed on from one person to another like an infectious disease. It is acquired by slow degrees. I can neither impart to him what is a gift of God, nor take upon myself the responsibility of misleading him. If he has nothing to live on, he won't earn enough by his pen for ten years to come. That's how it stands. If he is determined to go on, he'll have to get a berth in which he can earn his bread and butter while he goes on with his studies. He knows nothing of history, nothing of the world, nothing of his language and nothing of the passions. What do you expect him to write, when he has no idea, either, of what constitutes a dramatic situation?

This young man is typical of our times. When a man can't do anything, he becomes a man of the pen, a man of talent. He takes up the finest of life's callings, because he is incapable of discharging the meanest. He is what I was at his age, this child<sup>1</sup>. But I did know something. I should not wholly condemn a youngster whose work resembled the sort of thing I should have turned out at his age<sup>2</sup>. But who would go through the ten years that I went through? Is he likely to encounter any women who would enlarge his ideas, between two caresses, by raising the curtain which hides the stage of the world and its ways? Would he have time to frequent the salons? Has he

<sup>1</sup> G Hanotaux and G Vicaire, *La Jeunesse de Balzac*, 2nd Edition Paris, Ferroud, 1921 8vo

<sup>2</sup> Among others the tragedy of *Cromwell* of which we published a facsimile, with an introduction by our friend W S Hastings, Professor at Princeton University (New Jersey) in vol 1 of the *Bibliothèque Balzacienne* (Lapina)

the gift of observation? Would he bring away ideas that would bud and blossom fifteen years afterwards? People don't know what a phenomenon an author is. Only authors know of what they are composed—happiness, talent, energy, perseverance, sound health, second sight and I know not what besides.

He could no more be my secretary than M<sup>me</sup><sup>1</sup> could.

So I don't know what line to take. To tell him the truth would be to drive him to despair, and I don't want to have his despair to answer for. To let him go on in his present fool's paradise is just as dangerous. I won't take on this kind of thing any more. Besides he's as dumb as a fish. If he's got any ideas, he doesn't express them. He can't, he says so himself, says that what he feels cannot be put into words.

Well, that's what I have got to say about your protégé.

I haven't got much space now to tell you how glad I was to snatch that week away from this monstrous Paris here, where it's like living in a furnace.

Let me have by return an account in writing of the Major's two hypotheses about the destruction or overthrow of the earth by comets. I am in urgent need of this information.<sup>2</sup>

*Balzac's reply was a bitter disappointment to M<sup>me</sup> Carraud. However, she would not accept defeat and reiterated her supplications.*

<sup>1</sup> One of the Touringin's servants.

<sup>2</sup> For the latter part of *Séraphita*, no doubt.

[ 91 ]

Frapesle 24 August 1835

I am terribly grieved for my poor young man, that you should think him so incapable Your judgment is a little severe, because, though he be a poor writer, it does not follow that he is no good for anything What I do know about him is that if his father had cared to teach him mathematics, he would willingly have become a surveyor like him He has had the misfortune to have a father who is too young in conduct and disposition, and he has been put on a false track If he has ten years of misery to put up with, he must not lack for compassion the while So, my dear Honoré, I don't hesitate to ask you to have a thought for me and to try and find him a situation in which he could earn his bread You are so well known that you might perhaps be able to find him one In doing a thing like that there's something that repays us for all our trouble, it is a sort of happiness that you ought to get to know Think of me, then, in this matter, for the more the poor lad is put down, the more I feel obliged to interest myself in his lot It is for those who occupy good positions in the world to hold out a steady hand to those who cannot keep their feet Honoré, I count on you I will take it upon myself to tell M Chevalet that you cannot take him on It would be wrong of you to throw up this affair in disgust I undertake it, for my part, because I have to accept the consequences of my actions and the poor lad has as yet found no one but me who enters into his troubles and who has not laughed at him for his excessive shy-

ness, and, because of it, taken him for a nonentity  
If you bear in mind my keen desire to save him from  
want, and, may be, from something even worse, and  
if you find some little job for him, send a line to me  
and don't put yourself to the bother of writing him  
direct I should grieve if your wish to help me involved  
you in anything vexatious

Carraud's hypotheses are as follows

Admitting (which is by no means agreed) that the comet is a solid body, then, if it should come in contact with our globe and strike it in an opposite direction to its rotation, such bodies as were not adherent to the soil would be hurled into space at a velocity of something like two leagues a second Comets have been observed with tails occupying forty-five degrees of the horizon, that is to say half the space between the zenith and the horizon Halley's comet, which we are expecting, will pass us, when in its perihelion, at a distance of only eight million leagues If its tail is of considerable dimensions it may bring about our destruction in several ways If the tail consists of hydrogen it will combine with the oxygen of our atmosphere, there will be an explosion, because all the fires on the earth's surface will cause this combination to take place, and we shall thus be deprived of our atmosphere If, on the other hand, the tail contained some sort of poisonous gases, they would kill instantaneously, cyanogen, for example, which, as soon as it was inhaled, would produce a coagulation of the blood Or finally if, as seems likely, comets are worlds in a gaseous condition, their tails are no doubt composed of various

metals so sublimated as to be in a state of vapour That again would result in death in a variety of forms The taste of copper which cholera patients notice in the air may afford an idea of it, for cholera may well arise from some such cause Have you ever looked carefully at a glass of water into which a piece of sugar has been dropped? It sends up little oily filaments which pass through the water without sweetening it and which are the sugar itself, melted May it not happen that the comet, in its passage close to our atmosphere, will let fall some of these atoms of vaporised copper which, coming into contact with such as find themselves in their path, will kill them, and leave others close by quite unharmed?

Adieu, my dear Honoré I've had a fire to-day That will show you what dreary weather we are having May all the pleasures form a goodly guard about you and hide from you those dismal sights that might make you sick at heart I know of no one born under such a lucky star as you As for me, it is all very

<sup>1</sup> The theories of Major Carraud, so M Ch Nordmann, whom we have consulted in the matter, assures us, are worthy of attention, especially if we take into account that, at that time, the spectroscope had not been invented and the study of astrophysics was still in its infancy He adds, however, that they are unduly pessimistic The earth, as we know, encountered Halley's comet on the 18th May, 1910, and mankind were none the worse In fact, no one noticed anything at all The reason was that the quantity of poisonous cyanogen contained in a comet's tail is so minute that it could do us no more harm than the tiny proportion of hydrocyanic acid contained in a small glass of Kirsch Moreover, added M Nordmann, the tails, and even the heads, of comets are so tenuous that the encounter is rendered completely innocuous

well my losing myself in the contemplation of a flower I can forget nothing and I take my sorrows with me whithersoever I go They are a heavy burden, for each day brings its little tributary woe Do you see anything of Auguste? What is he doing?

Carraud sends you a handshake and goads you from afar He is fifty-four to-day, and all the merrier for it

*Balzac is sorry to have grieved Mme Carraud, and wrote her again, on the 28th August*

[ 92 ]

[ Paris 28 August 1835 ]

However furious my letter may have been, Cara, it did not at all imply that I was deserting your protégé If you thought that, then you don't know me even now I have only one good quality That is the persistent energy of rats who would gnaw through steel, if they lived as long as the crows So I am trying to get him going, but that's not to be done in a day He's got to learn

Thanks for your letter I am in a terrible quandary for money Perhaps to-morrow I may be without a care, if the things I've got going turn out well But it's also possible that I shall go under A highly dramatic situation, to be continually between life and death like this It's a corsair's life But muscle work is not always enough

All loving thoughts Whenever you want something in Paris worth twenty francs, let me know, so that I may pay my debt—unless you would rather have a money order I would send it direct to M Carraud

if you don't want anything, which would be wiser  
There is something of the artist about you You have a  
taste for elegance, and elegant things are dear Personally,  
I shall give them up, till I've got a substantial  
competence This struggling for money disgusts me

A good handshake for Major 'Piston' and kisses  
for the children That week at Frapesle did me a power  
of good.

*So Balzac is going to try to get the young literary apprentice into harness, and invites him to come and talk things over*

[ 93 ]

DEAR SIR,

I have to return your manuscript, *Pourvoi en grace*<sup>1</sup>  
We will talk it over I am at Chaillot

Kindest regards,  
DE BC

*In October, 1835, the death occurred at Bourges of Madame de Lapparent, Madame Carraud's sister Balzac at once writes to condole*

[ 94 ]

[ Paris circ 26th October 1835 ]

I have heard of the loss you have had It would have  
been a grievous one if Madame de L had been a good  
sister to you But you are not one to repay coldness  
with coldness, and you will always feel a pang at a

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1836 by MM Lajarry, Leceinte and Pougin  
(2 vols, 8vo)

severance like this And so I send you innumerable kind thoughts at this sad time

I had dinner yesterday with Borget I have written the name Frapesle a hundred, nay a thousand times in *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, a work which, up to the present, looks to me worthy to go in among *Séraphita*, *Louis Lambert* and *Le Médecin de Campagne*. Doesn't that tell you that I have often thought of you?

At last, my dear, I see a patch of blue in my sky Five months more and I shall be out of the wood These last few months my pen has been flowing with gold It was time I was just going under But I think I've to hammer away for another five or six months Next year my pen will bring me in seventy thousand francs I owe thirty-five thousand That will leave me thirty-five thousand for myself, less my expenses Of course there's still what I owe my mother A play would pay her back Then I shall see what I can do to build up her fortune again Mine will come after

You will soon be receiving in quick succession the fruits of my efforts, and you will be seized with amazement A few days at Frapesle would do me good but I cannot get there A host of things detain me Receiving money and paying it out again is an occupation in itself

You neglect me as if we were born brother and sister Well, good-bye I write no one Since I returned from Frapesle, I have consistently been getting up at midnight and going to bed at six, and I have been paying off eight thousand francs a month regularly

All affectionate greetings Kiss your children on the brow for me, and a handshake for Major 'Piston'

Always yours,

HONORÉ DE B

*Having closed her sister's eyes, Mine Carraud returned to Frapesle, when she replies to Balzac*

[ 95 ]

Frapesle 26 October [ 1835 ]

It was good of you to write to me, Honoré Auguste has doubtless told you what I have been going through for some time past and what few free moments I have had My family, which was so compact a company three months ago, has already been reduced to two-thirds and the health of my youngest brother is causing me great anxiety They bring with them a grave warning, all these deaths, and it is with no untroubled heart that I look on my children who are still so young and for a long time to come will need their mother's care My visits to Bourges have been melancholy ones, and they are not finished yet, for my brother-in-law has fallen into such a depressed state that I am really alarmed about him He will never be able to endure the loneliness that is in store for him, and of him, if of anyone, it may be said that the soul of his life has passed from him He is by nature light-hearted and gay, he will never be able to feed on his desolation and come at length to find a charm in it, as the melancholy-minded do If his children cannot devote themselves to him, I am afraid he will not long survive his wife, strong and healthy though he appears I have witnessed all the

emotions to which a death long foreseen and bravely faced can give rise Then came the merely physical struggle, a frightful thing to see, when in spite of all its efforts the soul was unable to gain the victory Lastly came that instinctive shrinking of living nature from the nature that is dead, and the need to touch, array and lay out this poor woman, who but a short while ago was still breathing and whom I had helped to pass, with as little pain as might be, along the always difficult way that leads from Time into Eternity—all this, I say, took more strength than I ever thought I should be able to summon up These contacts had such an effect upon me that I really thought my hair would turn white It was not grief, but something worse, far worse than that Although I did not know my sister, so to speak, and she had always been hard towards me, I felt her loss very deeply Since we lost our father, she had been in the habit of coming here, and this interchange of services rendered established the sort of intimacy between us that is not broken without a wrench How skilled is the conscience in the art of self-delusion ! When the poor soul received the last sacraments (and she was very religious) she would have been utterly overcome if anyone had told her that she herself was in some measure responsible for the absence of her children at her death bed, owing to the severity with which she had treated them, and that, if I had given ear only to the voice of resentment, I should never have condemned myself to endure such scenes as that

Great as is the ability with which *Le Lys dans la Vallée*

has been thought out, hosts of women, when they come to read it, will say, 'All the same, it is not yet quite the thing'<sup>1</sup> The reason for this is that however intimate the confidences reposed in you may have been, there are others which you will never know, which it would be shameful to reveal, because there are innumerable ignoble things one does not put into words, and which one would deny even to a friend who might by chance discover them We are not ashamed at some definite misfortune or at a failure to see eye to eye with another, at something discordant in mind or heart, or at an evil suffered by us at the hands of another But these agonies that dwell with us at all hours, which we cannot express in words, at these we never hint, yet in them are the seeds of death From them come the debasement and the withering of the soul Oh, pray for them that suffer

So at last you behold a patch of blue in your sky, Honoré! See to it that you do not besmirch it again with any of those vapours, which, like all the former ones, would condense into clouds What is a cloud?<sup>2</sup> An agglomeration of the tiniest drops of water in its lightest form This atom of mist is nothing, viewed in isolation, yet of such the storm is born No more storms then, for they strike not you alone, and you have no pity on those whose hearts adore you

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Berny wrote '*Le Lys* is a sublime piece of work, without a blemish, without a fault Only Mme de Mortsau's death would have been better without her horrible regrets They detract from the beautiful letter she wrote' Balzac piously deleted the hundred lines thus called in question *Lettres à l'Étrangère*, I, 376

<sup>2</sup> Mme Carraud subsequently wrote a little book entitled *Les Métamorphoses d'une goutte d'eau*

Thirty-five thousand francs, less the cost of living  
But how much will that amount to? I should not like  
to say I have heard you belauding M de Chateaubriand's study with its oak furniture If the owner of  
the study in question had not been a man without  
any sense of order, to put it mildly, and had such a  
room merely for display, I should have said, 'Go on,  
have one like it' But I would rather have you mad on  
fal-lals and flighty women than willing to sell yourself  
for five hundred francs, like the father of the Romantic  
School<sup>1</sup>

When you have paid your mother, perhaps you will  
be able to think about yourself At her age your mother  
will be rich enough on thirty-five thousand francs  
If that's not enough, it means that she would squander  
whatever else you gave her Make her a regular allowance  
if you can But you mustn't mind my telling  
you, dear, that however much money you may make,  
it will never be enough for you At your age it's easy  
enough to add to your luxuries and creature comforts,  
but impossible to dock yourself of a single one

When Paris gets too tight a grip on you, come here,  
not to work, but to repair your instruments for work  
This steady, humdrum sort of life is what you need  
from time to time

Good-bye Go easy Your schemes are vast and you  
must have strength enough to carry them out I love  
you a lot What made you send that money-order?

<sup>1</sup> Nor was Mme de Berny any kinder in her references to Chateaubriand, for whom she had a sovereign contempt (G Hanotaux and G Vicaire, *La Jeunesse de Balzac*, 2nd Edition )

Haven't I always a host of things to pay in Paris? I did not have time to answer you You should have waited

The storm broke down all my flowers while I was away, and I found at home the gloom of the house I had quitted So autumn for me passes sadly away, for, if my flowers are taken from me, what else remains?

Courage and moderation

*The Chevalet affair is not yet done with Mme Carrand perseveres in her undertaking and writes again to Balzac*

[ 96 ]

Frapesle, 31st October 1835

Dear, M Chevalet wrote to me saying you had offered to take him with you, and enquired whether I should not be hurt if he left the place I had found for him I only secured this place for him through the influence of a friend, and I put the same question to this benefactor Meanwhile M Chevalet has been freed from this constraint and is now again asking whether he should present himself to you You will recognise in that the shyness born of misfortune I am giving him this note as a passport, and I pray that you will do for him what you were disposed to do a month ago You know, Honoré, that my heart will not fail to record it

Auguste told me there was a moment when you felt like coming and warming yourself at my good fire Why didn't you put the desire into execution? Good-bye May heaven grant you all you want and spare you every kind of ill We love you dearly here I await your marvels and am badly in need of them

to tone up my mind I shall end my days a dullard  
Tell Laure she is more mobile than the most scintil-  
lating, glittering star that is

[ 96A ] THE ABOVE WAS ENCLOSED IN THE FOLLOWING  
LETTER ADDRESSED BY BORGET TO BALZAC  
MY GOOD FRIEND,

I am here for another five or six days The sky is still grey There are only the last flowers of the late-flowering plants left, and all the trees here have shed their leaves Try then, my good friend, to have no more days as nebulous, and as unoccupied as Sunday last to think that your dearest friends can't give you the necessary sum to procure you six months' rest is lamentable

Adieu, I press your hand and fervently hope that this letter will reach you at a time when you are not too busy Everybody here holds out the hand of friendship to you Each one of us has his cross, dear friend, and, may be, you are not one of those who make it heavier than it is

All good wishes to you, and greetings to Sandeau<sup>1</sup>

*Mme Carraud really hadn't got an idea of the qualities lacking in M Chevalet Balzac proceeds to point them out*

[ 97 ] [ Paris, between the 26th October and the  
25th November 1835 ]

But, cara, the stream of life flows on in spite of us

<sup>1</sup> Jules Sandeau, who, after Borget, lived in Balzac's house in the rue Cassini

I offered, out of consideration for you, a place of the highest importance and of the most delicate nature, for whoso becomes my secretary will share whatever my political fortune may bring, and that is beginning to be so thoroughly understood that it is quite usual for me to receive ten applications a month, which I do not so much as answer I have friends who would like the job, but who are unsuited, as they lack qualifications, energy, adaptability or knowledge I did for you what I would never have done for my sister or for anyone else in the world, for a man placed like this in my home sees everything He could get me stabbed within a fortnight, he could do me irreparable damage with wonderful ease in the three departments of life, viz in literature, with my friends, in politics

As you were in such complete sympathy with the aforesaid young man, I had the blind faith that I have in your affection He had to choose between me and an institution I was not going to influence him one way or the other He chose the institution In the meantime, I ran across a poor professor, a man of forty-five, with a wife and family, who had once had money but was now a corrector for the press, a man who, there was no denying, possessed the qualifications which M Chevalet most certainly does not, a knowledge of grammar, logic, and typography

Instead of living here with me, he lives at home My publisher gives him fifty francs a month, and I another fifty There, at one stroke, are three interests satisfied Can I, the day when M Chevalet asks me for what is there no more, re-create it for him? Good-

ness is one and indivisible A just man is bound to help misfortune I have now nothing he could do for me And behold, when I duly explain the position to him, heaven knows what he takes into his head To-day I've been thinking a lot about it and to put anyone with me, he would have to be as a man, what you are to me, a woman and a sort of sister It would call for complete devotion, a sure knowledge, and an understanding of a restless life The fact is, I am afraid Jules Sandeau, who is certainly very far in advance of Chevalet in my thoughts, asked if he might be all that for me But, if in him the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, he is anything but a worker Some of his political ideas do not square with mine He is up to the mark on two points, he is not so on the third And yet, later on, when he has duly surveyed the situation, and when he has acquired the knowledge that he lacks, perhaps he will be the man

It never does to be illogical in friendship I would go to Peru for you, but would you have me take my seat on the Left in the Chamber, when I consider it my duty to sit on the Right? You know<sup>1</sup>

And I must confess to you that if M. Chevalet had come into my house, I doubt whether he would have stayed there,<sup>2</sup> because it was impossible for me to give up three hours [ a day ] of my time in order to teach him his business I can give away my money, but not my time I have creditors to whom I am bound My mother and my brother are in a terrible position I shall have

<sup>1</sup> Here four pages in the original are missing

<sup>2</sup> Any more than he did in his institution

to have wings if I am to attain my object Now training a mind, bringing it out, is a task that would take five years I implore you, for his sake as well as your own, try and find another place for M Chevalet That is enough on that topic

Yes, if I have a few days to spare, I will certainly come to Frapesle But how is it to be managed? I paid out eleven thousand five hundred francs in October I have to pay a similar amount in November, and twelve thousand in December I must remain on the field of battle and take my chance of cannon balls and bullets I can only come to you as a victor I have too much work in front of me It is even beginning to tell on my health I have a pain in my right side for which I shall have to consult the doctor

All kind thoughts Be assured that there is no balm for the soul so sweet as having affections in which one may rest without fear, in which the heart is restored These are the surest riches, and if I do not come to Frapesle it is because it is impossible for me to do so

Adieu, a warm handshake for the Major

*Mme Carraud is very busy with her family and her household affairs After nearly a month of silence, she again resumes the pen*

[ 98 ]

Frapesle 25 November [ 1835 ]

Don't be hard on me, my dear Honoré I ought to have written to you long ago, but how could I? Can I really be said to have lived for some time past? Life for me is getting more complicated every day

for telling M. Chevalet the way he should go, heaven forbid I have never interfered to that extent with anybody's future. He threw up his profession to come and ask me to help him, and as he did not convince me that he could take up anything else, and as I do not presume to say he cannot succeed, I acted in accordance with his desire. Charity, my dear Honoré, interpreted in terms of almsgiving, is such a petty thing that it does not merit attention. I look on it as something nobler and greater than that and if an unhappy wretch, even a Vautrin, were to come to me and ask me to help him to make good, I should use my best endeavours to do so, for I should look on his as a more hopeful case than Rastignac's.<sup>1</sup> You may imagine, then, what I felt I ought to do for a poor young man whose greatest fault is to have a gay father who is too young for his years and has, moreover, nothing to give his son. But enough of this. I have no right to go foisting my protégés on you. I asked you a favour, you responded with your customary warmth and kindness, and I am grateful to you.

I shall take a long time reading you, but then I shall savour you to the full. How would you care about a life with no reading and no conversation? It's a trying year. At one time Carraud used to keep me more or less up to date, but now whatever time Master Yorick does not swallow up, has to go to Ivan. Even when I'm dressing, my time is not my own. It's then I make Ivan recite, and hear his analysis. What would your great ladies say if they knew that a woman, just as

<sup>1</sup> Vautrin and Rastignac in *Père Goriot*

eager as they are to get into your chosen set, has to come down to that? And yet I don't think I am losing anything in this apparent absorption in material things I have, deep down in my being, an idea to which all the rest converge, a primary or mother-idea Is not this enough to preserve one from the greater vulgarity?

Good-bye, my dear, may money and the favours of the ladies descend like rain upon you, since you have need of them If one or the other should happen to fail you, be assured that there is happiness, too, in a quiet and sequestered life Do you see Auguste now and then? All good wishes from the Major, from me, thoughts to sustain you, when you're at odds with the world

Your friend

Z

*Balzac does not reply Five months later Mme Carraud returns to the charge*

[ 99 ]

Are you cross with me, Carissimo? I wrote to you a long while ago and, though you never answered me, I might have written you again But from your high place, the lofty station whence you survey the fortunes of the world, it may be that you cannot spare a glance for your old familiar friends And then I've been afraid, afraid of being thrust aside, afraid that an emanation from the heart could never find its way to you amid that mental ferment of yours, so active that it destroys all else

I received your books and the ordinary sort of gratitude would have expressed itself in a few words of acknowledgement and thanks set forth with the requisite consumption of ink I did otherwise I read them, *read* them I say, and pondered long upon them *Fleur des poés*<sup>1</sup>—what a clever book!—gripped my heart, but I looked for something of you in it which I did not find My old friend, you have got too clever for me The melodic line between us is interrupted *La Fleur des poés*, which must have won you immense praise, made me feel ill Oh, my *Grenadière*! You were not so clever then *Séraphita* still sets me dreaming about you, I cannot quite decide what your creed is in this work I ought to hear you read it aloud, then my doubts would be dispelled A benison upon you for that fresh and pure creation, Mina 'Tis one of Louis Lambert's white angels, a reminiscence from another world, 'tis love in its purity, such as any youthful maiden ought to feel Seraphitus is jealous, and ferociously jealous, like his fellow-men Seraphita is a cold-blooded flirt, like her female companions There are dreams of Heaven in this book, scenes of pure delight But what is good in it won't be understood All the attention will go to the absurdities of Swedenborg's religion I condemn it because I don't believe there's any perfection without good works You'd get to Heaven too easily

I dare not say to you 'Come', for what could Fraplesle be to you, now? Though I know nothing of you, except that you gave Auguste some Vouvray

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards called *Le Contrat de Mariage*

to drink, I feel that we no longer come under the same sky The urge to produce, produce unceasingly does not admit of alimentation in your case ( save the inalienable rights of the beast ) How a brain like yours would have benefited alongside the Major who is always asleep except when he's dozing, and me who am wholly taken up with my two brats! My dear, the forces of man are *one* If you apply them wholly to one single thing, the rest languish, and—must I confess it?—your physical faculties must be in a condition of complete torpor But as, do what one will, one cannot annihilate riches such as yours, I shall await the day when the need of repose shall make itself felt, and when you will ask something more of life than the perpetual titillation of your thinking machine Frapesle will sparkle then in one of its corners, and you will want to find out whether fresh flowers and open hearts are still to be found there That furnace into which you are cast and whose fires you stir assiduously, as if your creditors and your ill-wishers did not suffice for that—does not that fiery furnace make you long for a life of rest and calm? Will you never have a desire to think over, each passing night, the events, the phenomena, inward or outward, of ordinary life? Many are the joys you paint, many the situations, but of that one you never speak except by drawing on your imagination, and you embroider it as is your wont It deserves better than that It can be portrayed unadorned I have put a foot in the social world since I lost my sister Her daughter has come to Bourges and has often persuaded me to go there When

Lent was over, she entertained every day and once more I found myself surrounded by that drawing-room small talk that I had almost forgotten Once more I beheld petty passions stirred by petty things and using up an incredible amount of energy to produce microscopic results Every time I got back to my cottage, I flung to the sky and the earth, to my grass plots and my flowers, a look of gratitude and love I thanked them for keeping my soul my own and preserving me from every stain I am going back again to the Prefecture of the Cher, doubtless for the last time My health does not permit of these goings and comings nowadays I am going to put in a brief appearance at Tours and then I shall say good-bye to every sort of vehicle If you knew how I revel in the thought that nothing will take me out of my little retreat for ten years or more from now ! If you knew how it grows on one, this dislike of being mixed up with people and things ! Another thing is, I need all my strength of mind and body You know well that I live wholly for my children When Ivan has finished, Yorick will begin A grim prospect for one who was born to think rather than to act Yorick loves a cunning jest He has sometimes a look of you about him I fancy you must have put an eye on us when I was carrying him The little rascal will be up to some mischief one of these days He has got an eye that brims with intelligence Ivan is sensitive and grave He gives me much more anxiety than the sturdy one ever will We are so much alike that if he displays a crotchet, it is the same crotchet which answers him That ought not to be But I cannot

allay this immense longing for perfection, a perfection which it seems to me, he is born to attain Then, must I not, above all things, be true? Is not that the strong point of my educational system, which in many other ways will leave so much to be desired? But why should I tell you all this, you who are so wholly wrapped up in the present? What can you care about such little family details?

Adieu, dearest, adieu May the world ever welcome you to its palaces of rubies and sapphires May the women all have heavenly eyes and hair as soft as silk for you, so that you may reap therefrom as richly as you sow We who have but just one single sun, would ask no more of him than to look down on us with somewhat kindlier face It keeps so consistently cold that I marvel every day to see the brilliant hues of my anemones If a friendly blessing can give some added perfume to your life, then here is mine The day you come to Frapesle, we shall slay the fatted calf

ZULMA

I hereby inform you that Carraud smiled when he heard that you had spent a week in prison (He is a major in the local *Garde Nationale*<sup>1</sup>)

*From June, 1836, Balzac's labours became heavier than ever He founded the Chronique de Paris in which he*

<sup>1</sup> It is a fact that Balzac had commuted his service in the Garde Nationale by seven days in the lock-up in the Hôtel des Haricots The Hôtel des Haricots or de Bazancourt, the prison of the Garde Nationale, is no longer in existence It occupied the site of the present Halle aux Vins

*published La Messe de l'Athée, L'Interdiction, Le Cabinet des Antiques, Facino Cane Ecce Homo, Les Martyrs Ignorés By June he was completely exhausted and to crown his discomfiture a law case with Buloz about the publication of the Lys dans la Vallée was added to his worries Dr Nacquart ordered him to take a holiday and Balzac betook himself to Saché to seek a little rest under the roof of M de Margonne The rest was only relative, for he still went on working sixteen hours a day. But in order to write his Illusions Perdues Balzac must needs have by return of post, answers to various questions regarding the topography of Angoulême*

[ 100 ]

Saché, Sunday [ 26 June 1836 ]

CARA,

My poor state of health brought on by my recent labours, my lawsuit and my worries, has landed me in Touraine where my native air has pulled me round. Perhaps I shall go back to Paris by way of Loches Valençay and pleasant Issoudun. I should greatly like to see Frapesle before going back to plunge into the fight and resume my place in the firing line. Anyhow whether I see you or not, I have need of the following information about Angoulême and it would be exceedingly kind of you to let me have it by return of post for I shall only be staying another week at Saché. This is the address: 'Saché near Azay-le-Rideau. (Indre-et-Loire)'.

I should like to know the name of the street which leads into the Place du Mûrier and in which your tinsmith used to live, then the name of the street which

skirts the Place du Mûrier and the Palais de Justice and leads to M Berges' first house, next, the name of the gateway leading to the Cathedral and that of the little street that leads to the Cornmarket and adjoins the rampart that begins near the Cathedral Gate, and where that tall house used to be in which we sometimes heard the sound of a piano

I should like to know, if possible, the name of the Gate which led straight down to l'Houmeau That is all, but I am in urgent need of this information If the Major could draw me a rough plan, so much the better

I send you a thousand affectionate remembrances Laure is still far from well My mother is worrying herself to death about Henry As for me, I keep up the struggle like a drowning man dreading the final mouthful At the present moment, I am working sixteen hours a day at Saché, so as to get off my two last volumes for Madame Béchet who is bringing an action against me at the instigation of my enemies, who seem to have sworn to ruin me

I am bound to be back in Paris before the 10th July with my manuscripts ready I have only a fortnight in which to write two octavo volumes and if I do anything amiss the whole thing will be ruined You see what a position I am in !

I haven't been able to reply to Auguste nor to do any of the things I promised in regard to his monetary affairs In Paris I worked night and day, sleeping only two hours out of the twenty-four And so *Le Lys* came out I was nearly dead when I got into the carriage

Tell him about it all, so that he doesn't blame an affectionate and most devoted friend, namely your very constant friend Honoré I had no idea where to address a letter that I had started and been obliged to break off time after time It is at the moment on my desk in Paris That ought to give you some idea of what my life is like No, I had no more time to finish off and seal that letter than a soldier on the march for Wagram had for sleeping or writing to his lady-love

I am very anxious to have done with such a life, and I shall succeed, for, if in a year's time the solution has not arrived, it were better to go and serve the masons

All kind wishes and a cordial handshake for the Major I kiss your two boys on the brow I wanted to come to you, but Dr Nacquart prescribed my native air

HONORÉ.

[ 101 ]

[ Frapesle ] 28th [ June 1836 ] 5 p m

Carraud has brought me your letter and, so as not to lose a day, I answer you in two words The dear man is not quite sure about sending you a correct map However he is seeing what he can do, as I write The gate by which we came into Angoulême and which is nearly opposite the Cathedral, is the Porte Saint Pierre, the street which, on this side, leads into the Place du Mûrier is the Rue de Beaulieu, which, on the other side, brings you to the fine promenade which bears its name The street which comes out near the Cathedral, and which contains that old priory, a lofty building battlemented after the modern fashion merely to demonstrate its commanding character, is the rue du

AT FRAPESLE, 1834-1849

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PLAN DES RUES AYOISANT LA PLACE DU MARCHÉ A ANGOULÈME  
LETTRE DE M<sup>me</sup> ZULMA CARRAUD A BALZAC DU 28 JUIN 1836  
*Collection Spoelberch de Lovenjoel* Manuscrit A 293, f° 289, v°



Mimage and leads to the Minage [ or Cormarket ] The street in which M Bergès' former house is situated is the Rue Chindos, but it only begins to bear that name at that same house. Up to that point it is called the rue Miringo You go straight down to l'Houmeau through two gates and across the Grande Place where the barracks are situated One of these gates is the Porte Chindos,<sup>1</sup> which we always use and which is a continuation of the street of the same name, the other, the Porte du Polet, passes under the ramparts and is less frequented Beyond this gate is a little triangular square planted with trees You alarm me with all this work of yours If you can come by way of Frapesle and only spend a single day there, come <sup>1</sup> I may then have staying with me a young person from whom I am expecting a visit, an artist to the finger tips, who will make the most sluggish fibre in your being vibrate Auguste is not here yet, but he will be back in a few days in order to be with the enchanting one, who is also a painter Adieu, I must send someone into the town with this letter A good heart and good health As soon as ever your two volumes are done, you must plunge into a bath of flowers All kind thoughts May Heaven deliver you from the incubus which weighs upon you

With heartfelt devotion,

ZULMA

*Meanwhile Madame Carraud falls ill, and Balzac takes a trip to Italy, staying in Florence in connexion with the*

<sup>1</sup> Here Mme Carraud drew the little sketch-map reproduced on p 317

*affairs of his friend Count Emilio Guidoboni-Visconti  
The correspondence thus interrupted begins again with  
this letter from Madame Carraud*

[ 102 ]

Frapesle, 7th October [ 1836 ]

MY DEAR HONORÉ,

You have heard that you came within an ace of having to cast another flower on the grave of a departed friend I have been very ill, and although it is now a thing of the past, it has left me more sensitive than ever, with a squeamishness about everything that keeps me in a state of almost chronic *malaise* that I am not always clever enough to dissemble It ought not to be so and my only excuse for being like this is the worry I feel about my little Yorick who is so poorly The poor child is suffering from an intermittent fever which makes him very weak and has hitherto defied all attempts at treatment If he can only get well again, I shall try and make headway against this new complaint of mine, which looks alarmingly like having come to stay What would be the use of growing old if ossification did not come in due course and if we were always to be as fastidious about everything as we were in our young days?

Your last letter, which Auguste hung on to, saying he would answer it, touched me greatly I saw a great wound in your heart, and with you I mourned the passing of that angelic being whose greater sufferings you never knew Honoré, has there not been some reaction in you? I have none of the titles which she possessed to speak to you, but then neither am I hindered

by any of the scruples which so often made her hold her peace Notwithstanding that you beg me not to recall so sad a theme, I shall ask you whether, on the day this fatal sorrow fell on you, you did not realise that there was more in life than a pocket-knife that cost eight hundred francs and a walking-stick whose only merit was to make people look at you What a feather in his cap for the author of *Eugénie Grandet*!!!

I am very plain of feature,<sup>1</sup> dear, but there are some praises I have always looked on as offensive, because I felt that I deserved better How you have been misled by all those clouds of incense that have been offered you to your undoing! Have they not done their work and is not your life a hell? Can you call it writing, when you do it with a knife at your throat, and can you turn out a perfect piece of work when you've hardly time to write at all? You are ruined you say, but, my dear Honoré, when you began, what had you got? Debts And to-day you still have debts, but how different is the figure! And yet what have you not gained in those eight years? And do you think a man of intellect needs sums like that to live on? Must his pleasures be as material as that? Honoré, how you have misused your life and what gifts you have stayed in their upward flight!

Perhaps it is very rash of me to speak to you like this, but the truth is, the ills you feel affect me too I suffer

<sup>1</sup> Mme Carraud is really too modest, and her portrait, which we have examined more than once, certainly belies the sitter's statement

with you And I suffer, I alone, not you, for the ills which do not yet beset you, although they exist I do not reckon to see any more of you, for I cannot disguise the fact that to mix with simple folk like us has now no charms for you But, since I love you with a warm and sacred love, and although you are not now the Honoré of old times, my feelings have not changed I tell you things that no one else will tell you, because some want to exploit you, and others have not got clear enough consciences to speak in such a way. I fear for your future I think you are not sufficiently solicitous about it What gave me that idea was the horrible death of Madame de Mortsau! You spoilt a fine piece of work there, a fine idea!

Auguste has gone back to you I am anxious about him I am of opinion that he does not make enough of an effort to enlarge his ideas It seems to me that he cannot acquire a talent if he does not furnish his head better That is a thing which, for many reasons, I dare not tell him myself, but he is bound to take it quite well, coming from you He can't paint sixteen hours a day. Let him therefore spend such time as he cannot spend at his easel for the benefit of the profession he has taken up A musician can get on quite well without knowing anything outside his own art, but painting has all manner of connexions It would be just as though, aspiring to write, you had read nothing but novels, what would you have been able to do with such resources? He has a casual, careless attitude about things that really grieves me He doesn't even take the trouble to talk, now, or to go for a walk What he needs is to

see the world, and see it often. There are a host of things he would learn merely by doing that.

Good-bye, dearest. My little boy is just coming in from a drive, I can hear him and am going to fetch him. If I have hurt you, forgive me, for I am very fond of you, but I must be fair and square with you because I have such a high regard for you.

Your friend,

ZULMA

Tell Auguste to send me back the letter of yours which he kept.

*Balzac has little time to spare for correspondence. His Chronique de Paris, his books, and his business affairs take up all his time. But the stout Borget, who has made up his mind that he will see the world, pays a visit to his friends at Frapesle before starting for China and Peru. He gives them an excellent account of Balzac. Madame Carraud is delighted and writes him the following letter.*

[ 103 ]

[ Frapesle, 22nd December 1836 ]

Noel! Noel! A Happy Christmas to you, my dear Honoré! So at last you are quit of that pestering demon who has been devouring your time and giving your work a touch of haste that prevents it from shining forth in all its radiance. I cannot tell you how glad it has made me feel. You will do *Le Privilège*, the book which, from what you have told me of it, makes me long for it so ardently. I shall expect you, then. You will Frapesle-ize very comfortably at this time of year,

if not very luxuriously. I have no time for more than a line or two as I have several guests, and they are more on one's hands in winter than in summer because space is limited and you cannot send them out to sit under the trees. But the whole lot will be going in three days and then the time of utter solitude will begin, which you alone perhaps will be tempted to interrupt. But few as my words must be, I must find one to tell you that it is strange, to say the least of it, that you should upbraid me for my silence. I don't know your address and how to get a letter to you. I cannot tell. I am asking one of our acquaintances to deliver this one to you. I hope he will be able to unearth you. You can entrust him with the money you owe Auguste. Auguste asked me to collect it because Carraud has settled the accounts which he left over when he left France. He has gone off in the highest spirits. God grant that the chill waters of disillusionment may not put a damper on his happiness. They are not noted for enthusiasm in the country he is going to; but perhaps things will compensate him for what he finds lacking in the people.

Good-bye. Let M. Bourgongne have your address when he gives you this note. I will write you a proper letter direct.

Work now like a man that has shaken off his creditors, that can give his mind free play and is no longer the slave of necessity. Addio, Carissimo.

Z

*Early in January, Balzac writes this letter*

[ 104 ]

[ Paris, early in January, 1837 ]

But, Cara, you make me a noble and ignoble signor at pleasure! Not one of my friends can or will understand that my work has increased, that I need eighteen hours a day, that I am evading service with the National Guard, which would be the death of me, and that I've taken a leaf out of the painters' book and invented pass-words known only to such as have something important to tell me Me a Grand Seigneur! No I've sunk to the level of those whose incomes are remorselessly fixed and who cannot do as the Bedouins do, live on their capital And over and above my ordinary work, I am overwhelmed with business worries, I've misfortune's tail to disentangle The fifty thousand francs have been consumed like a wisp of straw, and I've still got fourteen thousand francs of debt in front of me, and that's just as bad as the forty-eight thousand I have paid, for it's not the amount of the debt, but the debt itself that torments me It will take me another six months to free my pen as I have freed my purse, and if I still owe something then, the profits for the year will certainly clear it off But then I am still a debtor, those fifty thousand francs were an advance on account of work to be done

I shall try and do what Auguste wants as soon as I can, for I've now got to look for those thousand francs among the sums other people owe me, and nobody pays up I went farther than you I told Auguste not to go for this trip at all He is wasting time He will not understand that, where the arts are concerned,

there is a technique you've got to get hold of. In literature, painting, music, sculpture you need ten years' work before you can grasp the synthesis of the art, as well as its material analysis. A man is not a great painter because he has seen a number of different countries and peoples and so forth. One may copy a tree, and produce a great masterpiece. He would have been much better advised to spend two years endeavouring to master the secrets of light and colour in a corner, like Rembrandt, who never went out of doors, than rushing about all over America only to bring home the cruel disillusionments which he's bound to suffer on account of his political ideas. There is a note of sadness about your letter which makes me grieve. I am always hoping to go and see you and to prove that neither time nor circumstances change Honoré for those for whom that name is a rightful possession. 'Tis three years now since I gave up reading the papers and I dwell in holy ignorance of everything that people say about me; so that I only took your wishes regarding criticism as an earnest of your affection.

Yes, take care of yourself. As for Ivan, you must get him away from his present environment as soon as you can. If you're going to make a man of him, you must get him into touch with men. He'll have to become acquainted with something other than the sweets of the paternal home, believe me. I simply must say good-bye now. I hope soon to put in a fortnight's quiet work at Fraplesle, and isn't it a curious thing that I shall be coming there to work on the very book I began there the first time I went. *César Birotteau?*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *César Birotteau* did not appear until December, 1857.

Well, all good wishes to the Major He must be very much put out by his little boil, seeing how fond he is of lying on the sofa Kiss your two kiddies for me As for you, well, you know all the happiness I wish you I should be very glad if I could see you towards the end of the month But it may be that some over-riding difficulties of a pecuniary character will compel me to go to England before I go to Berry God grant I may bring home what I hope to bring

My address has never altered It is still Madame Veuve Durand, 13, rue des Batailles

*It was to that address that Mine Carraud sent her reply*

[ 105 ]

Frapesle 18 January [1837]

What, my poor Honoré, those fifty thousand francs all melted away, like the snow that, a little while ago, covered the grass beneath my window? You are no more free from worry than you were before? How sorry I am for you, not because you are still in debt, for in debt you will always be, but because you can't develop strength of mind enough to resist the first whim that the least slackening off of your labours puts into your head Is, then, independence nothing in your eyes that you do not hesitate to sacrifice it to the nearest trifle, a pen-knife, say, or the pinchbeck halo of travelling post?

You have made me take a very indulgent view of the faults which tarnish so many poor women's lives, since you, a man of brains, with a philosophical conception of life, are even weaker than they are, seeing

that the attraction to which you yield is not so powerful as the lure that entices them However, Caro, since you know how distressing it is to be in debt, do not let poor Auguste experience the torture He writes to me again to-day asking me to pay up the things he had left over I know he would be too delicate to mention the matter himself, but I, who have no money and moreover don't devour it for my personal satisfaction, far from it, can only lift this burden from his conscience by appealing to your sense of justice towards him Make an effort, then, to pay up the thousand francs between now and the 1st February, so that the affair may not get back to his family, a thing, I know, he would dislike above everything. If I could get hold of a thousand francs, I should say nothing at all to you about the matter, but as, morally, you would be the first person I should ask to advance him the money, do, as a matter of justice, what you would do out of generosity, if you were not his debtor, and don't let our poor friend, in those far-away Savannahs, go dragging a weight of remorse and anxiety behind him

Like you, I am much afraid that he will come back very disenchanted with the new world The whole thing amazes him The manners of the people, so new and so downright, grate on him beyond measure His name has already got about, more than he, or his patron cares for, in connexion with his art Quite possibly this journey, as you say, may not bring in all the fruit he expects from it, but you can easily understand the attraction such a trip must have offered, and that,

at no great cost It's a chance that doesn't occur twice in a lifetime and, though I am sorry for him to be so far away from us, I cannot blame him

When, then, dearest, shall I see you working for the work's sake, taking it easy and not working by the volume? You would do such fine, such good things then! I don't know whether Frapesle will inspire you I hope so You will find it all very homely here What a time it is since you were here last! Don't go and give too much rein to your imagination about this excursion, it would only take the gilt off the reality, which is pale enough as it is

Yes, certainly, Ivan must be brought out, but there's no hurry yet Where would be a good place to send him? My income does not come up to my ideas, in which respect I share the fate of a good many other people in France I must therefore use my brains to discover a way of getting as near as possible to what I want I shall say a good word for State education, but only when I begin to be easy in my mind about its possible risks of infection

Adieu, Caro, think of poor Auguste, who is dumb-founded at the ways of the people among whom he is living now I am glad to say the Major has not got gout in his hands, so he can press yours with cordiality Thank you for the caresses you send my children May they bring them luck!

Z

*Balzac had again set out for Italy<sup>1</sup> in behalf of his friend*

<sup>1</sup> These Italian trips left more traces than one in Balzac's work Cf *Les Fantaisies de la Gma* in *Les Cahiers Balzaciens*, No 2

*Guido-Visconti; he stopped at Milan, Venice, and Florence and did not get back to Paris till the 3rd May He wrote at once to Mme Carraud*

[ 106 ]

[ Paris, 3rd May, 1837 ]

CARA,

I am just back from Italy, where I have been for two and a half months on important business, which, when it was finished, brought me in some money I had no other means of getting what I needed It is too long to go into now But when I got back, I thought of Auguste, and, as at the moment I do not know where or how to send him the thousand francs I owe him, I have decided to send them to you You will know better than I where they are to go

I will write you in greater detail soon For the moment I have only just time to advise you that I have despatched, by the Messageries of the Rue Notre-Dame des Victoires, one thousand francs to the Major, this 3rd day of May, the date of my arrival home

All affectionate greetings to everyone at Frapescle, and especially to you

HONORÉ

*This was Mme Carraud's reply:*

[ 107 ]

Frapescle 10th May 1837

I wanted to thank you for your two books, my dear Honoré, but I did not know where to get you You have been warming yourself in the Italian sun, if there has been any sun at all this year So it's all the better

that you have come back again I don't know whether I should have this virtue, I whose life has been virtually limited to contact with things, for things must count for more on the other side of the Alps, where the sun is brighter My husband cashed the thousand francs and at once paid off one of our poor exile's debts If you still owe him anything, you must tell me when you will be in a position to pay I will tell you of someone in Paris to whom he is still indebted

Not only time and space divide us, but illness has come to aid in this severance, which I find it hard to bear I never really recovered from the attack I had last year, and for the past four months, I've had one relapse after another It's hardly a week since I've been able to write I tried a change of scene, but that did me no good At Bourges no less than at Châteauroux, the feverishness found me out So I shall have to dwell on my own rock like the oyster, and condemn myself to a moral existence not unlike to his I have had to part with my little Ivan I was incapable of being of the slightest use to him in anything and it was necessary to keep him employed He is boarding with his master, in the town, and I see him twice a week when the weather is good enough to go out This is a full early prelude to the loneliness that awaits my old age I am not strong enough to go into the town and as I cannot occupy myself for long at a time, I grow prone to sadness I get those fits of melancholy that often used to come over me when I was young, yet what a difference! There was something luxurious in the tears I used to shed in those days, now they are mainly tears

of sorrow and repining, and yet, if my body grows weak, my mind retains its vigour and its faith in things. Only I am less hopeful Forty-one ! Just think of it, my dear ! I've got to say it over and over again in order to believe it, for, though I have lived as much as two people ( because my imagination makes me sensitive to the most trifling emotion ), I still feel that my heart is warm enough to enter the lists not disadvantageously with many an one younger than myself. Neither disillusion, nor manifold disappointments have availed to shake the profound faith that is mine in the future of the human race

January has passed and many a month since then, and still you have not come I don't dare to keep on at you about a visit that for me would be so good. Our home is more than sad for a friend to whom the truth shall be declared straight out and not concealed in honied words. The flowers cannot unfold their petals, the leaves languish and delay, and it seems to me that the finger of death has been laid on all. Judge then how sad the gleams that must fall on a poor creature who has to use up all her strength merely to keep alive

Adieu, dear Honoré. I am quite surprised at having got through so long a letter. When you have time, send me a line or two and tell me what's going on in the world. You would be doing a good work. Carraud shakes you warmly by the hand. Courage and good health ! You need them both in order to march firmly along the way that lies before you

ZULMA CARRAUD.

Marinette, who writes me pretty often, desires to be remembered to you, as also does Mme Séguin, of Angoulême

*Balzac's affairs have got worse Werdet, his publisher, has involved him in his bankruptcy and the bailiffs are on his track What a splendid opportunity to betake himself to Frapesle in quest of peace and security He writes to Madame Carraud*

[ 108 ]

Paris 27th May [ 1837 ]

I may possibly come and beg a week or two's hospitality Anyhow it wouldn't be before the 10th June It's Frapesle at its best, you told me! We shall tell each other more in one evening than in a hundred letters Therefore kiss your two children on the brow for me, all friendly greetings to the Major, and for you everything that's lovely

HONORÉ

If you can, keep my visit a dead secret, for there's a lawsuit I want to avoid, a purely commercial affair, and I'll tell you the why and wherefore Werdet has gone bankrupt I backed some bills to oblige him, and to checkmate the acceptors, who know about it, my men of business require that your poor friend should be out of the way for a time

HONORÉ

*This retreat, in the peace and quiet of Frapesle, Balzac thought he could use in order to finish off the third set of Droll Tales But the 10th June went by and no Balzac appeared Madame Carraud writes him a letter*

[ 109 ]

[ Frapesle ] 14 June 1837

I was in the grip of another attack when your letter arrived, dear Honoré I selfishly rejoiced at the necessity that was bringing you to Frapesle I waited impatiently for the 10th and it made me forget all about the nastiness of my cinchona bark and my purgatives But the 10th came and went and there was no sign of Honoré It is too bad of you to lure us on with a hope you have not thoroughly made up your mind to fulfil The leaves are very green at Frapesle, nevertheless, and the roses are beginning to bloom You would be as lost here as if you were at the other end of the world We scarcely see a soul, and you would have plenty of time to get back to your room The nights are so lovely at this time of year

And *César Birotteau*, who was supposed to be coming into the world at Frapesle? Have you postponed its publication indefinitely? You know, Honoré, I don't like seeing you with an idea so long on the stocks It seems to me that it must lose some of its strength in this protracted process of conception, and that when it does come forth it will be a great deal more anaemic than if it had seen the light sooner. As you have not the time to meditate upon it, and as you are running a desperate race with life, you let fall on the roadway some flowers from the crown with which you girt your hero's brows when first he appeared in your head I don't know how far I am justified in offering these criticisms for it is now nearly two years since I saw you and I am no longer in telepathic touch with you I

might quite easily hit the wrong nail on the head without knowing it And I should be very sorry to do that

Adieu, inspiration and good health !

Your ever affectionate ZULMA C

Carraud had been revelling at the prospect of some good arguments, the sort of luxury he has to do without He can't abide all this shilly-shallying on your part

*Almost immediately Balzac replies*

[ 110 ]

Paris 17th June [ 1837 ]

Cara, I shall come but, being obliged to hand in *La Femme Supérieure* all complete to *La Presse* by the 25th, I thought I could finish it off in a week or two, and now I find it will take me right up to the 25th, to my very great regret The subject has grown and I've got to be in constant touch with the printers There are seven or eight proofs a day to get through *César Birotteau* is due next and I shall no doubt come to Frapesle for the interesting event Don't be angry with me It's a case of compulsion

I have found a place of refuge in Paris and a pretty safe one<sup>1</sup> but, believe me, as soon as I can I shall come and pay a visit to my sweet Frapesle Before many months are out I shall have settled down for five or six years in Touraine, so as to finish in peace the things

<sup>1</sup> With the Comtesse Visconti, a very tender friend, 54, Avenue des Champs-Élysées (*L J Arrigon, Balzac et la Contessa, Paris, Les Portiques*)

I have undertaken For I've got enough to last me seven years at least, working without a break

All kind greetings and a handshake to the Major As for you I have but to kiss your feet and subscribe myself,

Always yours,  
HONORÉ

*Yet once again Balzac fails to keep his promise. He does not go to Frapesle. He is held a prisoner by his work and, despite his desire to go and join his friends, he is compelled to write to Madame Carraud as follows*

[ III ]

[ Paris 22 November 1837 ]

Never in my life have I known such a piece of bad luck My little trunk was all packed ready, and just as I was going off to book my place and rush away to Berry, my publishers came upon the scene A newspaper<sup>1</sup> is offering us twenty thousand francs if I can let them have *César Biotteau* by the 10th December, the twenty thousand merely being for the right to print up to five thousand and to present it to their subscribers so as to keep up the fight against the forty-franc journals

It was impossible for me to refuse It means that my share will amount to twelve thousand and five hundred francs in twenty days For a week past I've been working away sleeplessly By the 10th December I shall be as good as dead And perhaps I shall come down to you

<sup>1</sup> *The Figaro*, which in December, in association with *L'Estafette* presented *César* as a free supplement to its subscribers

for a rest, for it seems I've got to repeat this effort in January for another big paper, but I shan't do it unless they pay me an advance of thirty thousand francs, cash down I confess it would be a pleasure to pay off, in a few months, debts that have been weighing on me for nine years All loving thoughts I kiss your children on the brow A grasp of the hand for the Major I should like to dedicate *César Birotteau* to you, but the Major said he would rather I didn't

Always yours

HONORÉ.

*The year 1837 had been a bad one for Balzac, the Chronique de Paris had come to nought, Werdet had gone bankrupt, judicial proceedings had been started against him On New Year's Day the doughty fighter wrote in these terms to Madame Carraud*

[ 112 ]

It is no more, such are the tidings just brought to my ear by the mournful bell, the last sounds of the fleeting year as it hastens to its grave

All hail to 1838, whatever it may bring us ! Whatever troubles it may conceal in the folds of its robe, what matter ? There is a remedy for everything That remedy is death, and I am not afraid of it

But good-bye, dear friend I cannot keep my eyes open, and my hand is incapable of writing anything legible on this paper any more I embrace you, and press you to a heart that is devoted to you Sincere and tender friendship in 1838, as always since 1819, that is, nineteen

years ! Greetings to the Major. Kisses for Ivan and Yorick I read Ivan's letter with great pleasure

*In February, having come to the end of his strength and his resources, he at last goes down to Frap esle for a rest. He was there a month, in the course of which he submitted a marvellous project to the Major asking what he thought of it from the scientific point of view. It was a proposal to work the silver mines of Sardinia so as to recover what the partial exploitation of the Romans had failed to extract. Carraud was delighted with the plan, and so Balzac, back again in Paris, hastened to get together, not without difficulty, the necessary funds, and hurries off to take ship at Marseilles in pursuance of the great adventure.*

[ 113 ]

Marseilles 20 March [ 1838 ]

Cara, the date will tell you a lot of things In a few days I shall have, to my sorrow, an illusion the less, for it's always just as you're in sight of the climax that you begin to lose faith in the thing. To-morrow, I'm off to Toulon, and Friday I shall be at Ajaccio From Ajaccio I shall see about getting across to Sardinia I didn't have time to write from Paris in answer to your kind letter , but I thought I should have some time to myself here When I get back to Paris I will write you a word in reply, giving you some further ideas about what your brother told you

If I fail in this undertaking, I shall fling myself heart and soul into the drama You, who know how inaction weighs on one and how I hate to wait for everything to be cut and dried for me, you would never believe

the obstacles I've had to encounter It seems that energy brings more trials in its train than apathy It has taken a lot of courage in tackling details to overcome every difficulty The little I had in the way of jewellery went to 'the Uncle's' My mother and a poor cousin bled themselves white Well, here I am within an ace of the result, and I can assure you that you misjudge me in thinking that I cannot do without luxuries I journeyed five nights and four days on the outside of a coach, drinking sixpennyworth of milk a day, and I am writing this from an hotel in Marseilles where your bedroom costs you eightpence and your dinner one and three When need arises, as you shall see, I can live like the wild man of the woods I don't so much mind the going, it's the coming home again, if the thing goes wrong

But enough Addio, cara I kiss your beautiful, soft hands, I press the Major's and I kiss your two boys on the forehead If I drown myself in the Gulf of Lyons, you will know that my last care-free days, when all my troubles were forgot, were spent at Frapesle But however things turn out, well or ill, you'll see me there again, and wholly yours

HONORÉ

*From afar Mme Carraud follows her friend's progress, anxiously awaiting the result of his Sardinian adventure*

[ 114 ]

3rd August, 1838, Frapesle

Carissimo, I've been dreaming of you, I offered you my hand and I had the very distinct impression

that you took it I didn't write to you because I didn't know where to catch you, but I dreamt of you There has certainly been some mysterious communication between us You must have sought me, inasmuch as you came to where I was What is it you want? What can I do to please you? And this enterprise? How has it turned out? *Mon Dieu*, will your luck ever turn? The hotel you were in was not a good one You had put aside the whole crowd of false necessities So far, so good, my dear! I love you to be quit of all those innumerable petty necessities which lessen the real stature of a man, by giving him a factitious one The fact was you had an idea, an all pervading idea which swept away everything else May it materialize and bring you into that environment of wealth and luxury which you deem so essential to your happiness and to your mental freedom As for me, I am drifting in a totally opposite direction The *government* of my house weighs me down and wearies me, quite modest though it be I never see a two-roomed cottage, with a garden in front and a potato-patch behind, without envying the lot of its inhabitants A single maid-servant would be enough, and I could day-dream at my ease without anything to worry me Day-dreams are a necessity to the kind of half-life that I lead It makes up the share of happiness due to me from Heaven, as to every other creature inhabiting this earth

So you are not back in Paris yet? Have you still kept on your rooms there and will this letter ever reach you? This uncertainty worries me If I were a little more of this world, I should know whether you have

published anything or not I should have got it and by its means put myself into touch with you I am putting Ivan to boarding-school at Versailles and I've almost persuaded my lord and master to spend three months there every winter Over and above the fact that I shall be near my beloved child, I am actuated by the conviction that it will have a salutary effect on the head (the weak head) of the house At Versailles his heart will be in the main current, and he will be able to display those intellectual treasures which, in this place, he can put to no good use What do you think of the plan? But don't say anything about it, because if the idea were harped upon too much, he would have none of it And when I am on the spot, will Madame Veuve Durand,<sup>1</sup> I wonder, open her door to me? Shall I be vouchsafed a sight of you, once at least, in your sanctuary? Ivan is in Switzerland with M Périolas He spent two months at Besançon<sup>2</sup> He needed that spell of rest before starting work seriously, and could not have been better employed than in travelling about I shall scarcely have him a month with me, but he is happy and I take care not to complain Yorick is shooting up in wonderful style, but he will never replace his brother There is not that intimate, intuitive communion between us that has always existed between Ivan and me It often happens that I cannot discover the motive behind Yorick's actions, but Ivan's mind I

<sup>1</sup> The name under which, as we have seen, Balzac disguised himself at No 13 rue des Batailles, Chaillot, in order to avoid his creditors and the *Garde Nationale*

<sup>2</sup> Where Périolas was stationed from 1837 to 1839

was always able to read, even when he was quite little, and before he developed a conscience

Adieu, cher Honoré; you won't be drowned in the Gulf of Lyons, and if you have to labour might and main to get your affairs straightened out, I shall I hope be near enough to you to come and press your hand from time to time and give you courage If writing is a worry to you, just send me an envelope addressed by you, for, much as I value your letters, I should grieve to be the means of interrupting your work I love you enough always to take things up with you where we left off, even if you were years without giving me a sign of remembrance I have so often blamed your enormous correspondence and so clearly observed how it diverted your powers by taking you away from some idea you were analysing and working upon, that nothing in the world would induce me to swell the number of those absurd demands upon you Treat me, then, as one of whom you are so perfectly sure that you may put aside even the thought of me

Adieu, if I had known you were back, I should have written you long ago

*It was not at No. 13 rue des Batailles, Chaillot, but at les Jardies, par Sèvres, Seine-et-Oise, that Mme Carraud's letter came into Balzac's hands Sick of Paris, sick of being chivvied and worried by publishers, creditors and the National Guard, he made up his mind to go and live in the suburbs. He bought a plot, several plots, where, to suit his own tastes, he caused to be built the strange chalet which is described in the Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées*

and which furnished Léon Gozlan with the material for more than one anecdote<sup>1</sup> It is about this new house that he now writes to Mme Carraud

[ 115 ] [ Les Jardies, after 3rd August 1838 ]

M de Balzac, aux Jardies, par Sèvres ( Seine et Oise ) That will be my address for many a day to come, my thrice beloved, for my house is almost finished and I am in it Three rooms one above the other Drawing-room down stairs, bedroom on the first floor and my study on the second The whole, joined together by a ladder dignified by the name of staircase, composes your friend's abode All around it a garden walk which winds about in one small acre<sup>2</sup> It is surrounded by a wall, but no flowers, trees or shrubs will be planted there till next November And then, sixty feet away, is a separate building comprising stables, coach-houses, kitchens, etc , a big suite of rooms and servants' bedrooms Such is les Jardies The parrot's pole on which I am perched, the garden, the servants' quarters, the whole thing is situated in the centre of the Ville d'Avray valley, but in the Sèvres commune, alongside the station of the Versailles railway, at the back of the Parc de Saint-Cloud, half way up the slope to the south , the finest view in the world, a pump that is going to be wreathed in clematis and other climbing plants, a charming spring, our flower-world, and silence and—forty-five thousand francs of debt the more You see<sup>1</sup> Yes, 'tis mad, but 'tis all settled and done

<sup>1</sup> L Gozlan, *Balzac en pantoufles*, chapters 2, 4, 13 and 14.

<sup>2</sup> The 'arpent de Paris' measures 3,419 square metres

No, don't talk to me about it It's got to be paid for, and now what nights I spend !

I've been to Sardinia and I'm still alive I found the twelve hundred thousand francs I thought I should, but the Genoese had already seized it on the strength of a *biglietto reale* issued three days before my arrival I staggered for a moment like a man dazed, and that was all I stopped on three days to finish up Count Visconti's business so that my journey should not be entirely fruitless and I have been back a month, up to my eyes in business, work and distractions Every bit of ground I want means ten landlords, ten contracts, ten sets of negotiations I am in a wasp's nest and I can only evict one wasp at a time One of these days I will tell you all about my journey, a strange tale, I warrant you !

I'm now driving a four-in-hand theatre, bookselling, play-writing and book-writing That will explain how it is I haven't written to you But what I can tell you is what pleasure your souvenir gave me, 'twas worthy of the friends of Monomotapa

I know that Auguste is coming He has had many disappointments, and I should like him to have what I owe him so as to prove to him that I know the value of a friend like him and a heart like his That is one of the first things I shall see to and, although I am gripped by a grim necessity that has never undone a single button of her steel bodice ever since I was born, I have still more faith than ever in my work I have been promised twenty thousand francs by a theatre for the play I am on, and I am going to organize my dramatic work on a

very big scale That's where the money is There's nothing in books, these days

That's how matters stand with me Everything is worse, work and debts both heavier The only thing is, I do things more cheaply, and I'm nearer to Paris than anywhere else that I've lived Ten minutes and ten sous and I'm there whenever I want I've no fear of calls or interruptions, and the place is my own Once I'm there, everything is all right And so I've tapped a new fund of energy in this mode of life, for I like to be like this, alone, but at any rate quiet The stage is set for the life humdrum and the life elegant, for entertaining my real friends and for keeping the sham ones at a distance A couple of hundred yards from les Jardies are the Versailles woods where I take my walks You wouldn't believe how fresh and pretty it all is and how delightful my surroundings will be in a few years' time But I shall have to make an enormous sum of money

Addio, Cara I will write you at greater length another time To-day I'm in a hurry But I thought I must reply to the delicate pressure of your silky hands and I've written you nearly four pages But how can one help it, with a sister ! I sincerely hope that what you tell me about will succeed, and you will see why from my letter Alas ! now that I'm going to imitate Frapesle, I shan't go there for a rest any more, but I shall go to see you, and it will be to my credit that, when I go, it will be entirely to see you I used to have a qualm or two about going there merely to be quit of Paris and restore my wearied brain to health A kiss for

Yorick All good wishes to the Major. Don't forget in your next letter about our friend Périollas As for you, I reverently kiss your hands, no need to tell you of an affection you know full well *Addio, a rivedera!* You can tell the Major now that I can demand visit for visit I have a spare room, or shall have, for the plaster is still over-wet, and I'm in it despite the doctor

*In September, 1838, La Femme Supérieure came out in book form, together with La Maison Nucingen, and La Torpille At the beginning of La Maison Nucingen a dedication<sup>1</sup> in affectionate terms, gives public expression to Balzac's friendship with Mme Carraud and his gratitude towards her Mme Carraud, deeply touched, writes Balzac as follows*

[ 116 ]

Frapesle, 4th September 1838

How shall I tell you, dear, all that I felt when I read your dedication? I was profoundly touched by it Such a public witness of your affection went to my heart, and, without stopping to discuss whether I merit so high an eulogy, I joyfully accept it Why can I not at this moment press your hand with effusion?

Les Jardies! So it's there that you have gone in search of the calm which is so necessary to you? Will you allow it to make its home with you, that calm which you will find but too monotonous? I fear not Living alone is a hard matter, especially when one has a wound somewhere that bleeds, and you are not in the position to which you aspire Do you not need

<sup>1</sup> See reproduction opposite

AT FRAPESLE, 1834-1849

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BROUILLON DE LA DÉDICACE DR à LA MAISON NUATINGEN à  
Collection Specberch de Louvenjoul Manuscrit A 293, fo 112



some friendly heart to receive the overflow of your sorrows? As you say, Auguste is coming back You knew it before I did, for I did not get his letter of the 14th April till the 1st September He is coming back *via* Canton and the East Indies In a few months he will almost certainly be back in Paris He is a man whose heart is devoted to you and in whom you can shelter from the world Besides he will have some news to tell you

Foul fall the Genoese! And you guessed as much! I blame myself about those happy hours at Frapesle Perhaps, if you had not come, you would have started on your journey a fortnight earlier Must we, then, always find a thorn hidden in our most hallowed delights? Twelve hundred thousand francs, how useful they would have been! How glad you would have been to be able to meet that need for money which for ever dogs your steps, and laugh in its face Well, so 'tis *les Jardies*, and the hopes of a success at the theatre<sup>1</sup>! And that is certainly something Then there's a visit from a friend which I promise you for this winter, for I shall settle myself in Versailles for three months at least so as to be near Ivan, and if you will promise to let Carraud know, when he comes to worry you, that you want to work, and if, when I come to spend three or four hours with you, you will settle me down in your drawing-room with a book and go up into your study to get on with your labours, I promise to make *les Jardies* the constant object of my

<sup>1</sup> A projected play in three acts which was never completed. It was to be entitled *La Gina*, 'The Return of Othello' (*Lettres à l'Etrangère*, I, 489)

walks Can you imagine how glad I shall be to see you surrounded by all the things you are used to, *at home*, in other words, and where you must be more truly *you* than anywhere else in the world?

Ho ! Yes, you will come to Frapesle again, and come to rest, to seek repose from your excessive labours, and from a life that's wholly intellectual If you were only to come for me, I cannot tell you how remorseful I should feel, not only for giving you such a *bourgeois* welcome, but also for robbing you of hours which, wherever else they were employed, would bring you more enjoyment

Ivan wrote me from Savoy the day before yesterday, proud and happy at being at Chamuny and at descending the Montanver with his alpinstock I hope to see him soon. It's a long time now since he went away, three months ! It's longer than I can bear, and I shall have to resign him to his studies again before a month is up One long life of sacrifice, it's more than a woman's strength can endure, for the bliss that came to me with this child will always be uncertain Henceforth it will always be a reflected joy, never again will it come to me direct Ivan is an emanation of me, he is my cherished dream I love Yorick with a protective tenderness which makes me materially speaking happier, but which has nothing in it that pierces the heart I heard from Versailles that M. Périolas was going to settle down there on his pension<sup>1</sup> I hope he does so for your sake.

<sup>1</sup> It was not at Versailles but at Lyons that Lieutenant-Colonel Périolas settled down after his retirement from the Army, and it was there that he died, on the 16th March, 1839

He is a fine type of man and a conscientious and enlightened friend, who would give you sound advice in your business transactions

There is an epidemic here which, I whisper it in your ear, bears a very close resemblance to cholera. Most of the deaths occur among children up to fifteen inclusive. There are villages where there is not one child left. In the towns the death-rate is relatively much lower than in the country districts. But as the complaint is called just *fever* and nothing more, it is not causing any panic, and yet it has carried off ten times as many people as the cholera that terrified everybody. My house has not been spared any more than the rest. Carraud began it, and, although he's been free of fever for three weeks now, he's very far indeed from being himself again. All my people, even the farm folk, have been through it, except Annette and Adrien. I've still got two of them in bed, pretty seriously ill. This is the reason why I did not answer you straight off, for the care I had to bestow on all these patients of mine—to say nothing of Master Yorick whom I have been putting through a precautionary treatment—took all my time, including the time I had to give to receiving unavoidable visits. Lastly, the recent death of my mother's sister, the poor old aunt who lived under my father's roof for fifteen years, knocked me up completely. She was eighty-one years of age. She had left Issoudun. It is not therefore as if I had seen a great deal of her. But this breaking with a past of which she was the sole representative has been a shock. It told me that the flood tide of my life was over for ever,

and that I now stood as a symbol of the past in the eyes of the generation about me And I turned my gaze on the little one, who will have need of me for a long time to come Nevertheless, I am very weary I should be glad to rest, without being obliged to go on supporting the steps of this far too young family of mine

Adieu, dear Honoré, adieu ! May the sun be ever shining above les Jardies, may the verdure there be always fair and the flowers keep their freshness May no cares ever find their way therein to mar the progress of your toil and, above all, may our presence there never be a cause of your leaving work undone If only I were stronger, I should love to be so near to you, that I might help you in the material part of your work But I should never have sufficient confidence in myself ever to do the least thing well

My husband is very fond of you and I—I feel that, if affection can make me so, I am worthy of the friendship which you shew me

Thank you for the token you sent to Yorick 'Tis a great big boy who cannot judge its value

Countless loving greetings

ZULMA

I have forgotten the name, is it *Fanny* or *Jenny*?<sup>1</sup>

*Availing himself of a friend who was setting out for Issoudun, Balzac entrusts him with a friendly message to Mme Carraud, whom he tells about it in this note*

<sup>1</sup> Fanny O'Brien, a character in *Béatrix*, a novel dedicated to Sarah, Countess Guidoboni-Visconti, his tenant at les Jardies and his model (L J Arrigon, *cit p 196*)

[ 117 ]

CARA,

Pérémét is starting for Issoudun May he bring to Frapesle a tender, sweet, gracious and sincere assurance of my affection I am in the thick of a fight for money If I win, I shall have put a plaster on my wounds

A thousand tender greetings The name is Fanny Kiss your children on the forehead A handshake for the Major

Always yours  
HONORÉ

*But Balzac soon sends his correspondent a fuller reply to her letter of the 4th September*

[ 118 ] [ Les Jardies, after the 4th September, 1838 ]

CARA

A thousand tender thanks for your kind letter, for, busy as this poor husbandman may be, he would rather keep his corn in hand and say to one whose friendship is so lively and so deep 'I feel it through every pore!'

Don't have any heart-burnings about those hours I spent at Frapesle They were two to one out there, and the Genoese made it all right for himself the moment I started, by bribing the Court people The damage was already done when I set out

It would be one of the good things in my life to have M Périolas close at hand He is one of the men whose character I have noted and esteemed, and they are few enough He showed such energy, and saw things so clearly, when he learned of my misfortunes, that

it was as good as ten years of friendship, and so, though we had not often seen each other, I thought of inscribing his name, as well as the Major's, by way of dedication to some scene of military life I am indebted to him for some valuable information He is one of the few people who, in my opinion, are possessed of marked literary ability I would willingly have him as one of my advisers

Don't hesitate to come to les Jardies as often as you like, for, although there's a lot of work done there, you will be never anything but welcome, nor will you mar the solitude there, for yours is a mind that furnishes and adorns Alas, for peace of mind ! I shall never know it ! You will be terrified when I tell you that since I've been back, I've had four volumes to get through, three or four comedies completed or in hand, money troubles enough to appal you and worries fit to send you into the grave I swear to you I've said good-bye to all my aspirations, all my luxuries, all my ambitions I want to live a simple quiet life, like a curé A woman of thirty who had three or four hundred thousand francs and cared for me, provided she had gentle ways and good looks, would find me a willing bridegroom She would pay my debts, and in five years my work would have paid her back It would mean some enormous sacrifices, still, better marry than go under And I can't count on a long life When you are my age, you can't go on working as I work without exhausting yourself so that you might as well be dead I only live now to discharge some sacred obligations

I hope to have some success in the theatre, but I haven't had time to think out the plays or to finish them off as I should like to see them Well, although the muse of industry is a companion that helps one to live in solitude, the need of someone who will never leave me again is making itself felt But I glimpse it faintly, that *desideratum*, through the haze of my labours and they are going to be so enormous for the next four or five months that I don't know whether I shall have two hours' real leisure to call my own

Be sure and take care of yourself Don't be angry with me if I don't send you the two volumes with *La Femme Supérieure*, *La Maison Nucingen*, and *La Torpille* in them Possibly I shan't be able I haven't another copy of my own

Adieu, always love this poor Honoré You are one of the only souls that know him, and remember that the two lines of the dedication are not the thousandth part of the great and lovely thoughts he entertains of you, for he flatters himself that he knows you better than anyone A thousand greetings to the dear Major Always yours,

HONORÉ

Pérémet did me a very good turn in connexion with the theatre, and like me he has a sincere admiration for Auguste's character, friendship apart<sup>1</sup> Kiss Yorick

<sup>1</sup> Perémé, whose name Balzac misspells, came from Issoudun and was a compatriot and friend of Auguste Borget's, and as one of his plays had been put on at the Théâtre de la Renaissance (Salle Ventadour), Balzac, when he thought of trying to get his *Ecole des Ménages* performed, got an introduction to the manager of this theatre from his friend's friend

*Mme Carraud is detained at Frapesle and says how sorry she is*

[ 119 ]

Frapesle 12 November 1838.

The time is passing, Caro, and I am not at Versailles, and I have not seen les Jardies yet. It is because the sum of my tribulations is not yet made up, because, whenever Yorick's health showed some signs of improvement, someone else in the house would have a relapse, and although they were but servants, I had to be there all the same All the more so, in fact, because the thousand and one queer ideas of this class of people makes illness doubly dangerous for them And now I am again tied to the place owing to the serious illness of my cook Yet there are countless reasons why I should be with my poor exile Thus to go out into the world, with no one to love and cherish him, is a great hardship for him, as he himself confesses There he is, launched forth into the world with no one he loves for him to lean upon He stretches out his hands in vain, there is nothing he can grasp It may be, therefore, unless ill-fortune dogs me too closely, that I shall be knocking at the door of les Jardies before the month is out How glad I shall be to see you in a house of your own! I will bring Ivan to see you one day You will talk to him about his trip to Switzerland, it will give you the material for a study of childhood. He will tell you about M. Périolas, and about his innumerable kindnesses in a way that will give you pleasure, and you will

appreciate the man all the more as described by the lips of a child

I have seen M Pérémé, who talked to me a lot about you, and with a warmth that did me good How proud I shall be when I go to see one of your plays acted I seem thrilled at the applause already, as if I was really there and as if the play were a thing of my own Be quick, then, and get it put on, so that that joy may be mine this winter So you'll never really know how to adjust yourself to the wretched materialities of existence, which are such a burden on all of us? You say you want to live like a curé, and to have a wife with a dowry of four hundred thousand francs Do you know, then, that in the remotest village in France there isn't a single living worth as much as twenty thousand francs a year? What you should aim at, my dear, is a big income with all its worries and drawbacks Even if a curé's life were ready to your hand, there's something in you commonly called imagination which would corrode you after the manner of those fabulous poisons the ancient writers tell of It must have a chance to act, in order that it may not react May heaven, for your sake, always keep it in action Only, may good fortune come and shed its rainbow hues upon you, it is time, high time Seek out this woman then, the woman whom you need Put all your fashionable friends in the field, for it is necessary that your wife should know how to comport herself in the world of society, otherwise you would not be able to put up with her I know wonderfully well what *life* has to be where you are concerned

I told you about your requirements long ago You laughed at me then, for you were younger And now when you are painfully conscious of them, the chances are not so good of finding the means for their suitable satisfaction I have got *La Famille Nucingen*, which I knew already I have read *La Torpille* with the greatest pleasure, though I do not understand it all, and, if I must speak my whole mind, I noticed, with a pleasure at which perhaps I ought to blush, the difference in tone between my dedication and that to Prince A . . . etc.<sup>1</sup> There is a colour and a tone about real affection, which the mind alone can never convey

You are in the middle of your gardening labours now. But in Paris you may ape God and say 'Let there be a garden' and lo ! a garden is created, beautiful, delicious, distinguished, rare In the country we have none of that If you cannot do a thing yourself, you must give it up Everything is let go, ill-looked after Happily air and space are ours But this living like a caterpillar on its leaf is a great trial to such as have other ideas, whose feelings are not yet dulled, who have not had all the bloom rubbed off them in their contact with the world You ought to be pleased with me for not losing everything in this forced stagnation here, and for having kept myself unstained by the pettiness of this petty town I get on very well here with everybody, but I am more respected than loved, and that was no easy matter, especially for me who am plebeian by race and inclination

<sup>1</sup> *La Torpille* was dedicated to Prince Alfonso di Porcia, whose guest Balzac was at Milan in 1838

I've had no more news of Auguste since his letter from Lima dated 14th April last, the one in which he told me he was returning to Europe *via* China, India, the Moluccas, and the Cape on board an American vessel Something tells me I shall see him next month God grant he be kept safe from every storm and accident!!!

Did I tell you that my little Yorick has been dreadfully ill? Obstruction, hydropsy, everything under the sun And now behold, he is coming back to life again, thanks to the skill of my excellent doctor and my own unremitting perseverance You will see him with a little blood under his skin Worrying for the child that's away, worrying for the child that is here, worry, worry, worry! Is that what life consists of? May be we could not live without it, for, in order to live, we must feel

I have got one of my brothers with me, the deputy, a bachelor He is a man who has been all over the world, and the Parisian world to boot, without the world's moulding him to its pattern He has a sort of primeval simplicity and candour about him, united with profound learning, high intelligence and great austerity I wish you could have been here with him during the time he is giving us He is a type of man one rarely meets with, a pure Tourangin, a good study for an artist

Adieu, my dear Honoré, my heart is no lighter than it ever was Heaven grant you health and courage, so that your little Eden at Les Jardies may never cost you a sigh or a regret I shall be seeing you there before long Carraud is away for the day For three and a half

months now I haven't been able to do a thing I've had Yorick on my knees the whole time

*Madame Carraud managed to get away from Frapesle  
Behold her now at Versailles!*

[ 120 ] Saturday, 16 December [ 1838 ] Versailles

Here I am, dear, two leagues away from you I've been here twelve days and I haven't seen you yet I had a good mind to take you by surprise, when they told me last Monday, after I had got back from Paris, that you were expected to dinner You didn't come, and you sent no word, and we all came to the conclusion that you were not at les Jardies Tired of waiting, I am writing you to-day to ask you to let me know when you will be at home I absolutely must see you My pleasure here would not be complete without that Be quick and tell me what day I shall find you in Also let me have Laure's address Perhaps she's forgotten me, but I should like to kiss her.

Adieu, dear, what a talk we'll have ! ZULMA C

*But Balzac, up to his eyes in work, is almost inaccessible to poor Mme Carraud He is as grieved about it as she is and writes her a few months later*

[ 121 ]

[ Les Jardies, about March 1839 ]

DEAR,

For the moment what you ask of me is absolutely impossible, but in two or three months nothing will be easier. To you, my soul's own sister, I can entrust

my most intimate secrets Well then, I am in the most frightful difficulty Every wall in les Jardies has given way owing to faulty construction, the builder not having laid the foundations properly And all that, though it's his fault, comes on me, for he hasn't a penny, and up to now I've only paid him eight thousand francs on account Don't think me imprudent, Cara I ought to be a rich man to-day I've done miracles of work But all my intellectual labours have come to nought I've just come down like a foundered horse I could well do with a little rest at Frapesle

*The Renaissance* had promised me six thousand francs advance if I would write them a five act play As I had to pay out six thousand francs at the end of February, I set to work, and spent sixteen nights and sixteen days on the job, with only three hours out of the twenty-four for sleep I put twenty men on it at the printers, and I managed to write, complete and get printed *L'École des Ménages* in five acts, and I was in a position to read it on the 25th February My directors hadn't any money, or it may be that Dumas, who had let them in for a flash-in-the-pan and incurred their displeasure, had come back to them They wouldn't listen to my play and turned it down So there was I, worked to a standstill, sixteen days chucked away, six thousand francs to pay and nothing to pay it with This was too much for me I haven't got over it yet My theatrical career is going to follow the same course as my career as a writer My early work is going to be rejected You need superhuman courage to withstand these hurricanes of disaster However there are

other times coming My three-francs-fifty octavo volumes, each containing a complete work, are selling fairly well, and it's quite possible that, in a few months' time, the whole situation will have changed. You know my indomitable courage But my bodily strength is giving way now beneath its rider—the brain.

You can well imagine that if I was unable to go and see you at Versailles it was because I was in the middle of work that could not be postponed I had scarcely time to go and see the *diva*<sup>1</sup> There's no halting, no bivouacking in my campaigns At that time I was working on *La Fille d'Eve*, *Béatrix*, *Le Grand Homme de Province*, altogether five octavo volumes, and I was bringing out *Le Curé de Village*<sup>2</sup> You can imagine what my life was like Lastly, I shall not keep you waiting for the money you ask me for, and I will send it as soon as I get it, even if it means putting off some pressing creditors Moreover, I'm going to see if I can't manage to raise a loan Sooner or later you've got to bow your head beneath the Caudine Forks of monetary necessity

Adieu, my dear, my very dear! And believe me that if I don't often write to you, my friendship never slumbers, for the farther we get on in life, the closer grow such precious ties as those which bind us, you and me

All kind messages to the Major I hope Yorick is well Don't imagine that what you take for a country

<sup>1</sup> Countess Emilio Guidoboni-Visconti, née Sarah Frances Lovell Cf L J Arrigon, *op cit passim*

<sup>2</sup> The beginning of which appeared in *La Presse*, 1st-7th January, 1839

house, and is really only my workshop, is making me look down on Frapesle

Come, I must say good-bye Heaps of love H

And if you write Auguste, don't forget me

*A little while afterwards Balzac announces that he hopes soon to be at Frapesle*

[ 122 ]

[ Paris, 5th May, 1839 ]

CARA,

I have some hope that in a couple of months I shall see the end of the horrible struggle which you know I have been waging with the material difficulties of life I will write you a word or two, just to set your misgivings at rest and to explain my silence You will understand it all in a few words Since the winter, I shall have done sixteen volumes, or eight works at ten thousand francs the set, besides which I have prepared three plays for the theatre In two months or so, I shall have won back the freedom of my pen, and a certain bargain which I hope to bring off will pay off the major portion of my liabilities And so I shall be sending you, as soon as I can, the money for Borget

This effort has had some effects that were pretty serious at my age During the past five months I have often nearly succumbed to those sleepless nights, and the small amount of time I've given to society had a worse effect on my health than hard work Many of my friends, you perhaps included, may have taken my absorption and furious application to work for

neglect and selfishness Ah, little do you know that my hours of distraction have been rarer than water in the desert, and that I fell into a horrible condition of melancholy, as I realised that if I arrived at my goal I should be dead to everything, insensible to happiness and too weary to enjoy the repose that I had won

And so, a thousand tender greetings—and do not forget me ! My walls at les Jardies have fallen down and it will perhaps be another year before I am able to enjoy the refuge which I had created for myself in the midst of sorrow and wretchedness, trusting in results that never came to pass But the troubles which this house has brought upon me have stirred up some remnants of energy, with which I am going to achieve my task Let me know, then, how you are and how your affairs are going on Do not imagine that I am not coming to see you May be I shall come quite soon to spend a few days Every good wish to the Major, and kisses for the children

HONORÉ.

*The months go by, October comes, and Mme Carraud writes to Balzac*

[ 123 ]

Saturday, 12 October 1839, Frapescle

My dear, you are happy, I know it, and I did not wish to mar, with any alien thoughts, the felicity of your present existence My own life is very much occupied and my occupations are commonplace I am greatly taken up with my rural life and I take care that nothing shall come and arouse me from this salutary torpor However, the middle of August, by bringing home

my son, together with several of his friends, made Frapesle an animated place again for the time being Then our friends came, one by one, slowly, and summoned me back to the intellectual life After that, I did a little reading, now and then I knew you had published *Le Grand Homme de Province* and I got myself a copy It is full of wit, but of kindly, simple, unpretentious wit It was a long time since I had read anything that gave me so much pleasure, wherefore I conclude that your pictures are true, though I am not in a position to judge I greatly rejoice to be able to praise you thus without any reservation, not that I am foolish enough to suppose my praise is of any importance, but because nothing gives me a more agreeable sensation than to feel myself at one with you, and our environments are so different that such harmony is rare You will not come to Frapesle again, of that I feel sure, though I cannot resign myself to it Seeing you at le Jardies is not at all the same thing In the first place, your time there is so precious that no one would ever think of encroaching on it, and les Jardies is much farther from Versailles than I had imagined I resign myself to this severance, as to all the other consequences of your ever increasingly complex life The paths we follow are so widely sundered that it is not surprising that we cannot take each other by the hand I am not so ferociously selfish as to hope you will have some tremendous excitement that will force you to take a complete rest, or one of those unhappy love affairs which make one feel how good it is to have friends on whom one can rely But if such a state of affairs did

come about, remember Fraplesle and the two old folk that live there, and do not hesitate to come

Auguste is not in China now. He had to leave at the beginning of June and go to Manilla in order to proceed thence, first to Calcutta, then to Delhi and then to Benares. He cannot get any letters from us. I still go on writing to him, but the knowledge that he never gets any of our letters casts a deathly chill over this correspondence. Imagine it! For three years past he's only had two letters from me, and one, I believe, from his people. The poor lad doesn't expect to get home for another three or four years. God sustain him in his long exile. The corn-merchant who dispatched the goods to him is again asking for the seven hundred and six francs for which I obtained a postponement. I don't know how much you owe Auguste. If you can pay this amount, in whole or in part, you will be doing him a great service, and us as well. If not, we shall have to borrow it, for the year has been a disastrous one for us. I think I told you how we had suffered from the hail. As Auguste does not want his family to have anything to do with it, we are going to shoulder the liability. Let me have a word from you quickly on this matter, so that we may make the necessary provision. If you can do anything, send the money to M. Barthe, 64, rue de Montreuil, that is where M. Tollard has to be paid, and it would be useless sending the money here, for us to send it back to Paris again. Have you had many flowers this year? The dry weather did a lot of damage to my poor garden. Then, I had no gardener, and I did all the planting and tending all through the

summer It is only since Ivan arrived that I have given up working on it He's gone back to Versailles, poor lad That is one of the great trials, this separation However, I've got to be brave and bear it Little Yorick is coming on marvellously He is not in the least like his brother He has got a style of his own, and I fancy he'll make his mark

Good-bye, dear I feel almost guilty for having made you come down from your heaven to entertain you with such paltry matters, but your wings are strong and the divinity you have placed there is mighty You will soon have forgotten all about us again May life weigh lightly upon you, in that sanctuary, even if you have hard things to put up with outside May the air be always full of light there, and may the sky be always blue Sadly I proffer you my hand I feel that there are worlds between us I shall come and see you at les Jardies, sometime in February

*Balzac replies as follows*

[ 124 ]

[ Les Jardies, November 1839 ]

You think I am happy ! Mon Dieu, sorrow is mine, intimate, profound, sorrow that cannot be told As to material considerations sixteen written volumes, twenty acts done this year have not been enough One hundred and fifty thousand francs earned, have not earned me tranquillity !

I have fifteen hundred out of the two thousand francs I owe Auguste, but seeing the rate at which I pay,

five hundred francs of this amount ought not to be looked on as repayment, for he should have interest I regard myself, then, as still owing him a thousand francs But the best I can do for him will be to pay him sometime during this winter, as soon as I've had a success at the theatre

Don't imagine that les Jardies is making me forget Fraplesle I shall come many a time yet to talk with you under your own roof, you whom I love so much, your mind and your character At the moment I am completely worn out, morally and physically But my money troubles are so cruelly pressing that I cannot come and see you now.

The only rest I get is in a change of work To get through with things, I shall have to put in six months' work, like that which prevented me from coming to see you, though I was only half-an-hour's railway journey away But it will be digging my grave.

Les Jardies was going to be a godsend in many ways In point of fact it is a ruin I've done with affairs of the heart And so I've been seriously thinking of getting married If you yourself should meet anyone, say a young girl of twenty-two, possessed of a couple of hundred thousand francs, or even one hundred thousand, provided I could use the money for my affairs, think of me I want a wife who would be what the circumstances of my life require her to be an ambassador's lady, or housekeeper at les Jardies But don't say anything about this It's between ourselves She must be an ambitious and clever girl.

Adieu worlds are nothing where hearts beat true

I don't proffer *my* hand, I press yours All friendly greetings to the Major

I have not sent you my books because in two years' time I shall be bringing out a fine complete edition

Yours

The same HONORÉ

*Without delay Mme Carraud sends her answer*

[ 125 ]

2nd December [ 18 ] 39, Frapesle

What, not happy! Has not one of those dreams come true for you, one of those dreams we only dream when we are young? So rumour is a lying jade! Believing you to be plunged in that perfumed atmosphere of love which only comes once or twice in a lifetime, I did not dare to write to you, thinking that such an intervention would be a profanation, and all the time your heart was bleeding, my poor Honoré. What further consolations can I offer you, when I have said that I love you dearly and that when the heart is sore, the memory of affections sweet and pure is like balm to the wound? For consolation is a vain word. When one is suffering and not able to grapple with the ills one has to face, consoling words do but corrode and sear. I tell you that, as one who has had the bitter experience

We have had to pay Auguste's seven hundred and six francs. It has been a hard year for us. We had to refer the matter to Auguste's brothers, who are bankers. They would not advance their brother a penny more than we could guarantee. And very soon they will be

holding his share of an old aunt's money. She is eighty-seven and can't go on much longer That's what business men are like !

Well, if we've got to lose the money, we will lose it rather than leave a slur on the name of our absent friend When you can release us from our guarantee, please do so A charming prospect you hold out to me when you speak of coming and conversing beneath the shade of our walnut trees. But I scarcely think it will come to pass Your work and your other ties will never allow you to pay a simple, friendly visit. It's I who will be calling at les Jardies, long before it enters your head to ask my hospitality again I hope to come more often than I did last year, for I am choosing a better time of year. I shan't be leaving Frapesle till the end of January, and the month of March I shall spend at Montreuil I shall then come on and criticise your garden with easy confidence, as one who has earned the right to criticise by cultivating my own, with my own hands, even if I cannot call them my white ones I have no gardener and I watch and tend the poetry of Frapesle as if it were the poetry of my own soul I cherish them both to give pleasure to my friends, and the least neglect would be a crime, a very crime Alas, will not advancing age be all too soon upon me, robbing me of the power, the longing to achieve the better, ever better? Is it not, even now, making me unwittingly mistake for the better, that which is merely good? Well, I still have the will to improve, this immense longing for perfection, although perhaps I have changed its incidence For me it is a witness

that the vital principle is not wholly quenched in me and that I still have something to offer to one who loves me Perhaps it is to my tardy motherhood that I owe my youthfulness of soul Our spiritual elevation is generally measured by the exigencies of our position, and, in that respect, mine have been considerable My little Ivan satisfies me in every way, or at least would satisfy me if I had in my heart the tiniest grain of maternal pride But the goal I have set him is a lofty one and his pace to me seems over slow I must confess, however, that anyone but I would be content, nay, proud of it Yorick does not progress so rapidly He has intelligence, but, with it, goes a spirit of independence and self-will which I respect as much as in me lies He will be a man of action<sup>1</sup>, he must not be thwarted I shall find it much harder to train him than his brother, but the task does not daunt me

I don't know of any girl that answers to your specification, and, in truth, even if I did, those words of yours 'No more love affairs for me, so I'm thinking of getting married,' would give me pause I have come more than ever to look on marriage as a very serious undertaking I have pondered long on *la Physiologie du Mariage*, and so thoroughly do I realise all the trials and tribulations of the married state, fomented by the married ones themselves, that I never go to a wedding now without feeling that I shall have to cry You will excuse me, therefore, if I play no part in what

<sup>1</sup> Yorick Carraud became a captain in the 6th battalion of chasseurs à pied and was killed before Sedan on the 1st September, 1870

may prove the bane of your existence All the same, I do know a girl of seventeen, tall, rather pretty, and distinguished-looking who, morally speaking, is the very thing for you But she has no money Even now, she would make an admirable wife for a minister of state, or a needy poet. It is not often you meet a girl brought up on such virile lines But as I say, she hasn't a penny. It is a great pity.

Good-bye, my dear. True, worlds may make no difference to real affection, but when they keep friends apart it is not easy to ignore them, and everlasting longing for the beloved object wears away the spirit and brings despair at last; but not doubt, oh, never doubt!

In two months from now I shall have greeted les Jardies and its owner.

*In March Mme Carraud arrived at Versailles whence she wrote to Balzac.*

[ 126 ] [ Versailles ] Wednesday [ 11 March 1840 ]

I don't know who it was, *mon ami*, that told me from you that you were spending all your time at the theatre and couldn't see me I have been waiting till this crisis in your life was over, to ask you what day I could meet you The Monday before Shrove Tuesday I explored the whole of the Faubourg Poissonnière and never found the house where Laure lives, which I thought was No 27 rue du Faubourg<sup>1</sup> No doubt I've forgotten the proper address Yes, certainly, I

<sup>1</sup> The Survilles lived at No 28 (not 27)

should love to come and see your play. If Laure hasn't got a seat, try and let me know I will try and get a ticket for myself and another for someone to go with me, for I can't go about alone after dark. Don't be angry, then, because I did not tell you I was here. I was loth to bother you at so solemn a moment, but every time I passed les Jardies, I wasted you one of my liveliest appeals.

When shall I be able to see you there? Adieu, I want this letter to go straight off. Look, here is my hand

ZULMA

Love to Laure

*Mme Carraud was in luck! Balzac was up to his eyes in rehearsals. On the 14th March Vautrin was to be played for the first and only time at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre. A fortnight later, Mme Carraud writes again to her unforthcoming friend*

[ 127 ]

Tuesday, 11 a.m. [ 1st April 1840 ]

Dear, I have just got here by train. In the diligence I came along with some Versailles folk whom I did not know, several of them were Army people. They began to talk about you, about *Vautrin*, about the 'gruesome' school, and they gave you a fine dressing-down. One said that Balzac-House was to be sold, another added it was a forced sale, and then a gentleman who is certainly not a soldier said he knew you quite well. He said he had travelled with you this very day on the four o'clock train and knew you hadn't a penny of the money to pay for your house. When

someone mentioned *Vautrin*, he said you didn't write it, and went on that you had had some young man<sup>1</sup> whom you kept shut up in your house all the time he was writing the play, that you were selling him your name, but that as soon as you saw there was something in the thing, you had demanded it back and shoved the obscure young man aside A little while afterwards, the orator of the carriage, an enormous officer, who, according to his story, had travelled in every country in Europe, said that he knew a story which you could turn to good account, and that if he knew you, he would tell it you, to show that however extravagant your imagination might be it did not come up to this piece of grim reality He said that the headsman of Piacenza had a daughter wondrous fair. She was beloved by a young man of the town belonging to the upper-middle class His father was a rich merchant The headsman died The lover demanded the young woman's hand and she consented to give it on condition that he took her father's place and became headsman in his stead. The youth never hesitated Endless comments were made about this But what you ought to know is that the gentleman who boasted that he was pretty intimate with you, solemnly promised he would tell you the tale so that you might put it in a story And as he talked a lot of drivel about you, the main part of which I've

<sup>1</sup> No doubt Charles Laissaily, author of *Les Rourées de Trialph* and a friend of Lamartine and de Vigny, who died mad in 1843 He had collaborated in *l'École des Ménages* in 1839 Balzac's collaborator on *Vautrin* was Théophile Gautier (*Lettres à l'Étrangère*, I, 506)

told you, I thought I ought to let you know about him, so that you can act as you think fit, and not be taken in by him

Good-bye, *caro mio*, keep well and let me have an answer to the note<sup>1</sup> I wrote you in Paris a few hours since I am very anxious to present my young man<sup>2</sup> to you, and to get you to let him come and see you after I have gone

*A rivederci*

*Of a truth Balzac was invisible But still Mme Carraud returns again to the charge*

[ 128 ]

Tuesday, 31st [ March 1840 ]

Dear, I shall soon be off, and before leaving Paris I very much want to present to you M Martelli Ubicini, Ivan's tutor He has a richly endowed mind which craves to do homage to your own According to the world's report, he is uncouth and has a peculiar way with him which it is unlikely he will rub off, even when he comes in contact with the social world The poor lad never gets any time off, and it's by a special favour that he's coming with me to Paris on Sunday If you can tell me what time you would be free to receive us, you will be doing me a great pleasure, and I shall be infinitely grateful to you I should feel hurt if I could not put him in touch with you I owe him a great deal, and I should be so glad if I could discharge my debt to him by bringing about something which

<sup>1</sup> Which has not survived

<sup>2</sup> No doubt the M Ubicini referred to in her next

he most ardently desires, and which makes me value him all the more

Good-bye, Honoré, may the governmental susceptibilities be set at rest and permit you to have your revenge on a public that love you

Affectionately yours,

ZULMA

My love to Laure

*No answer A few days later Mme Carraud resumes the pen*

[ 129 ] Versailles Tuesday Evening [ 7 April 1840 ]

I sent you my number, my dear Honoré, and I did not see you I am very anxious to introduce Ivan and his tutor to you Would it not be possible, therefore, for you to see us at les Jardies one day, any day you were kind enough as to fix? M Ubicini<sup>1</sup> will not be staying on with Ivan and his companion after the end of the year He wants to travel, and as he cannot do so on his own resources, he is on the look out for a tutorship abroad, in Italy if possible for '*aux cœurs bien nés*'—you know the rest It may please you, perhaps, to be greeted by so sincere an admirer, you who are so well supplied with enemies, and by an enlightened and intelligent admirer to boot And as society has done nothing for him, as its contact has not rubbed smooth any of the asperities of his rich and remarkable nature, his admiration will not be so very commonplace If he takes your fancy, allow him to see you sometimes,

<sup>1</sup> This well-known journalistic authority on the Eastern Question was a great traveller

on one of the rare occasions when he can get away, that is to say once or twice between now and the holidays He has lost all his self-confidence That hinders his work and paralyses abilities that are decidedly out of the common A word from you in his behalf would be an incalculable advantage to him and revive a good fire that has nearly been put out I am only staying until Holy Saturday<sup>1</sup> Try then to arrange for me to see you before I go, and let it be a holiday, because of Ivan It must not be that I should leave Paris without saying good-bye to you

I went to Laure's to ask the porter if you were there, and then on to 108, rue de Richelieu Everywhere I was told, no Adieu, my hand goes out to you Keep well

ZULMA

*Mme Carraud went back to Frapesle, leaving Ivan in Paris On the 1st August, 1840, Balzac writes to her as follows*

[ 130 ]

[ Paris ] 1st August [ 1840 ]

Dear, I have seen your protégé, I told him the truth about things, and the truth is not encouraging I haven't seen him since He did not give me his address, so that, if I wanted to do so, it would not be easy to find him Tell him to come and see me once a month There might be some work going one of these days

We are all awaiting Borget<sup>2</sup> But what are you doing at Frapesle? You keep me too much in the dark

<sup>1</sup> Which fell on the 18th April

<sup>2</sup> Who came back in December, 1840, from his long journey



Cathedral is architecturally It is now sixteen years, my dear and ungrateful friend, that I have been at work on it, and it will take me eight more years to finish ! I am waiting till I have finished my present edition before sending it to you, always on condition that you burn everything I have given you, as being, from the errors it contains, unworthy of figuring side by side with such heavenly perfection as is yours

Borget does not come and see me once in a twelve-month I saw Périollas at le Havre He has his niche in *La Comédie Humaine*<sup>1</sup> like all who are good friends, and kind and helpful to me In two months' time the sixteen-volume edition will be completed, and in a month's time I am going to Germany for six or seven months So 'tis almost a farewell letter I am writing here

They tell me Yvan is a fine boy, and Borget hasn't brought him to see me !

My love to you, and greetings to the Major Pity me I am working sixteen hours a day and I still owe more than a hundred thousand francs ! And I am forty-five ! That's a sad look-out When am I going to see you in my workshop again, where you left your perfume behind you, so that you should be longed for from time to time ? Well there ! Good-bye

HONORÉ

*Balzac's optimistic forecast was not fulfilled He was not fated to complete his work Travel and ill-health stood in the way To the works already composed in 1845, were*

<sup>1</sup> The novel *Pierre Grasson*, which Balzac dedicated to him in 1844

to be added, among other masterpieces, *L'Envers de l'histoire contemporaine* and *Les Parents Pauvres*, but some fifty novels remained to be written out of the hundred and forty-three of which the *Comédie Humaine* was intended to consist Balzac now feels that the days of his active relations with Mme Carraud are over Henceforth Mme Hanska will be taking up all his time After long journeys in her company in France (even including Berry) and in Europe, he makes some lengthy stays in Russia<sup>1</sup> between 1847 and 1850 In far Ukraine Balzac still retains pleasant memories of his dear friend at Frapesle and in November, 1849, he emerges from his silence, writing Mme Carraud a long letter in which he looks back over the past For more than a year he has been living as the guest of Mme Hanska at the Château de Wierzchownia near Berditcheff, in the province of Kiev

[ 132 ]

Berditcheff, November 1849

MY VERY DEAR AND KIND MADAME ZULMA,

On two occasions my nieces and my sister have given me very bad accounts of you, and if I have not written to you, it has been because I could not I have been very near dying the death of poor Soulie, for I have been taken with terrible heart trouble<sup>2</sup> here, brought on by my fifteen years of hard labour For the last eight months I have been in the doctor's hands, a very great

<sup>1</sup> Balzac left behind him an unpublished account of his first journey to Ukraine It is detailed and very humorous this *Lettre sur Kiew*, as he calls it We published it with illustrations in No 8 of the *Cahiers Balzaciens*

<sup>2</sup> Which was to carry him off nine months later Cf Unpublished Correspondence with Dr Nacquart printed in No 8 of the *Cahiers Balzaciens*

doctor he happens to be, who is attached to the Palace and the estates of the friends with whom I am. The treatment was interrupted by one of those terrible fevers, called Moldavian fevers, which, starting in the Danubian marshes, spread to Odessa and ravage the Steppes. It is what they call intermittent cephalalgia, and I've had it two months. It's only just a week ago that I resumed the treatment for chronic heart trouble, and the day before yesterday my nieces sent me a letter telling me that you hope to keep Frapesle, but that you are selling the land.

Those words, 'Frapesle,' 'Madame Carraud,' awakened all my memories with such intensity that, though all exertion, be it only that of writing a letter, is forbidden me, I felt that I must tell you why and how I have only been able to write a few business letters since last February, so that you should not think that true friends fall off, and that you should know that I have never ceased to think of you, to love you and to talk about you even here, where they've known Borget since 1833! How different life seems when you've topped fifty! And how often we are far away from our hopes! Do you remember Frapesle, when I sent Madame Desgrès to sleep there? I've sent a good many people to sleep since. But what a host of things, what a world of illusions have gone by the board since then! And would you believe it, except for affection, which is ever growing, I am not a whit further on where I am. How swiftly evil buds and blooms, and how sorely happiness is balked and hindered. It is enough to make one disgusted with life. I've been three years arranging

a nest here, a nest which, alas, has cost a fortune, and there are no birds in it! When will they come? The years fleet by, old age is coming on and everything will wither and decay, even the stuffs and furnishings of the nest. You see, dear, things are not all rosy even for those who in appearance are well off. That ought to comfort us, but it comforts no one, neither the wealthy who, amid their wealth long to be free, nor the poor who, amid their freedom, long to be wealthy.

The Château where I am here, is like an islet in an ocean. The ocean is the wheat fields and steppes stretching away on every side, Asiatic in their immensity. But in this Château they sometimes speak of you, especially as time was lacking to permit us to see you at Bourges. We got there at nine o'clock and left again at two the following afternoon, after seeing the Cathedral, Jacques Cœur and les Filles-Bleues. Besides, try and get women in travelling costume to go and see another woman whom they don't know, when they cannot avail themselves of the resources of the toilet! One of the two strangers is now married, she is the little sovereign of fifteen thousand souls, and she is happy.

I know that Ivan is in good hands, and that my sister controls the goings-out and the comings-in of Yorick. But I should like to have a letter from you which would tell me more than the general run of letters in which one's friends just get a sentence per page. If you don't want to neglect an old friend of childhood days, a friend who loves you dearly and is sincerely attached to you, write to me at the following address

'M de Balzac, à Berditcheff, Empire russe, par Berlin et Brody', but if you don't write to me during the week following the receipt of my letter, I, very likely, shan't get it, for I'm being got ready for the homeward journey and I have to be back in Paris early in February

And now good-bye The Cossack is starting with the letters for Berditcheff, and I've only just time to kiss you from nine hundred leagues away All good wishes to the Major and Borget Are you going to make your home at Bourges or Frapesle? Be sure and tell me your plans Shall you be coming to Paris this winter? Well, all the best from your affectionate

HONORÉ

What's become of Périollas? Where is he? Is he at Tournon? Have you heard anything of him?



*Part IV*

THE HOUSE AT NOHANT-EN-GRAÇAY

1850



## The House at Nohant-en-Graçay

At length, in March, 1850, Balzac married '*l'Etrangère*' (*Madame Hanska*) He was now in the seventh heaven and his thoughts reverted tenderly to those who had borne him company when times were at their hardest He wrote long and triumphant letters to those he had loved most dearly, his mother, his sister, Dr Nacquart, and the present letter which he sent to the Rue des Rats, Bourges, where Mme Carraud was staying

[ 133 ]

Wierzchownia, near Berditcheff

5-17 March 1850

I put off answering your kind and adorable letter till to-day, for we are such old friends that you cannot learn from anyone but me about the happy *dénouement* of the great and splendid love-drama that has been going on for sixteen years Well then, three days ago, I married the only woman whom I have ever loved, whom I love more than ever and whom I shall go on loving until death This union is, I think, the recompense that God was keeping in reserve for me, to make up for so many adversities, for all those years of toil, of difficulties encountered and overcome I had no happy youth, no flowery blossoming time, but I shall have the most brilliant summer, the softest and sweetest of autumns Perhaps, looked at in this way, this happy marriage of mine will seem to you like a personal

consolation, showing you as it will that, for long sufferings, Providence has treasures in store which she bestows upon us at long last

I am not going to speak to you about your letter It awakened admiration in me quite as much as grief That is as much as I can say, but it has won you the sincerest of friends in my wife, from whom, for a long time past, I have hidden nothing, and who has also known you for a long time in the light of all I have told her about your greatness of soul, and my gratitude for all the hospitality you used to lavish on me I had portrayed you so well, and you yourself put the finishing touch so happily on your portrait, that you are an acquaintance of long standing And so with one impulse, with one accord, with one prompting of the heart, it occurred to us both to offer you a nice little room in our house in Paris, for you to come there exactly as if it were your own And now what shall I say to you? You are the only one whom we are inviting to do this, and you must accept, or you will deserve to be unlucky, for, just remember, I partook of your hospitality with the simple confidence of hallowed friendship when you were prospering and I was struggling with every wind that blew, with whelming tides, deep in a sea of debt But now, mine are the sweet and tender reprisals of a grateful heart Certes, had you not a loving heart, had you no gifts of mind, were you not one in ten thousand, I should not act like this What I would have you do would be but ill appreciated. But we, we surely must understand each other Well dear, you like elegance because you look on it as the

poetry of things, not because it appeals to your vanity as it does in the case of most Parisians It is as necessary for you to have the flowers you love, as air to breathe, and if you are robbed of that particular one of life's adornments, you, like me, like the *prima donna* that has retired from the stage, cannot help wanting to come back to it once more and look again on the scene you love so well Well then, come, come from time to time and see your child and breathe the atmosphere of art, Paris, elegance, converse with people of note and bathe your soul in the affection of two hearts that love you, one because you have been a kind and gentle friend, the other because you have been all that to *me* You will have a few days' happiness every three months You shall come more often if you wish, but you *will* come That's fixed

I did likewise in times gone by I came to renew my vigour for the conflict, came to Saint-Cyr, to Angoulême, to Frapesle, and there I gathered strength, there I looked upon the things I lacked, there I assuaged my longings You will taste all the sweetness, you will learn from yourself all that you were, although you knew it not, all that you were to me, an ill-used child of fate, a toiler, misunderstood and crushed, for so many long years, beneath the weight of physical and moral wretchedness Ah, I do not forget how like a mother you were to me, nor your divine compassion for suffering souls And so, when I think of all your worth, and how courageously you struggle with adversity, I, who have so often combated that doughty foe, I say that I am ashamed of being happy when I know

that things go ill with you But we are both of us above such pettiness as that We can tell ourselves that good and evil fortune are but modes of being, in which great hearts are conscious they are living to the full, that a stout philosophy is as needful in one case as in the other, and that adversity, when we have true friends to call our own, is perhaps better than envied prosperity I recognised myself in the life you are leading at Nohant, and, if our eyes were filled with tears, I was proud of you too You are doing good there too, as you used to at Frapesle Your name will be blessed there It has been here

Well, then, the moment you want to come to Paris, come, and never mind about telling us beforehand You shall come to the rue Fortunée, just as if it was your own place, just like me when I used to go to Frapesle It is my due You owe it to me to do so I will remind you of what you said about me at Angoulême one day It was after I had done *Louis Lambert* I was knocked up, ill, and—you remember—I was afraid of going off my head, and I referred to the way those poor wretches are neglected ‘If you go mad,’ you said, ‘I will take care of you’ Never shall I forget those words, or your expression, or the way in which they were uttered All that is as vivid to me now as it was that day in July 1832 It is on the strength of those words that I claim your presence to-day, for I am almost mad with joy

I greatly hope that this letter, which is but an outpouring of gratitude, will, though you are eight hundred leagues away, do you all the good that I derived, in

days gone by, from the rare, the all too rare tokens of interest that I used to receive from your friend Borget among others, flowers of affection which soon pass but which with me, where you are concerned, will never fade away When questions were put to me here about my friends, yours was the first name I mentioned I told them all about that home where the fire was always burning, the home that was Zulma's heart, and you gained two sincere women-friends (which is itself a *tour de force*), the young Countess Mniszech and my wife Good-bye for the present then I shall see you soon, for I am starting in a few days

All the tenderest thoughts of one who has loved you from of old Good wishes to the Major and remembrances to the good Borget

Your friend  
HONORÉ

*But before accepting the nice room which the newly-married couple were keeping for her, Madame Carraud would offer Balzac the hospitality of her little house at Nohant-en-Graçay (Cher), whither she had retired with the Major after leaving Frapesle From Nohant, which she spells Nohan, in the old-fashioned way, she sends her last invitation which, with great delicacy, she addresses to the newly-wedded Mme de Balzac*

[ 134 ]

Nohan, 28th May, 1850

MADAME,

I have just had news of your arrival from my dearest Sophie<sup>1</sup> and I hasten to wish you happiness in your

<sup>1</sup> Sophie Surville, Balzac's niece



to you, but I have a great regard for your husband, and I cannot but think that somewhere or other our souls must have met together.

I take this opportunity of thanking you for the gracious offer which Sophie has conveyed to me in your name Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to avail myself of it, but circumstances scarcely permit me to hope that I shall ever be able to go to Paris, particularly now that my younger son has come home to be with us

May I hope, Madame, that you will accept the expression of my affectionate regard and that you will permit me to subscribe myself

Your servant,  
Z. CARRAUD

I embrace my dear Honoré

*M and Mme de Balzac were not destined to go to Nohant They went straight to No 14, Rue Fortunée (Rue de Balzac) one night towards the middle of May They found the door bolted The house was all lit up, and in it was the manservant, François Munch, who had suddenly gone raving mad On the 18th August, 1850, three months later, almost to the day, Balzac died*

*Mme Carraud piously cherished her friend's memory, reading and re-reading the works she had seen come into existence Always glowing with the warmth of charity, she inclined towards the suffering and the afflicted She took up school-teaching and wrote for the young little books which have sold in tens of thousands such as La petite Jeanne ou le devoir, which was crowned by the Academy, and several*

*others which have been popularised by the Bibliothèque Rose*

Later on, old, almost blind, left a widow by the Major, who died in 1864, saddened by the death of her two sons, she spent the evening of her life peacefully in Paris in the house of her daughter-in-law, telling *Granny-tales* to her grandchildren, Gaston<sup>1</sup> and Madeleine<sup>2</sup>. Coming late to Paris she remained a 'Berrichonne' at heart, and still went on with her charitable work in aid of the poor folk of her little Nohant. She died full of years on the 24th April, 1889, and on the following Sunday, at her funeral at Nohant, two thousand people reverently followed her coffin as it was borne to the grave by personal friends. Already in the year 1886, a resolution of the municipal council of Nohant had bestowed on one of the squares of the little town the name of its benefactress.

Such was 'la dame du Berry' Balzac's truest friend, and one of the noblest women that have ever entered into the life of a man of genius (M. B)

<sup>1</sup> Musical composer, grand prix de Rome (1864-1920)

<sup>2</sup> Married, 22nd September, 1890, M Georges Payelle, at present first honorary president of the Cour des Comptes

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